DISRAELI'S WORKS

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Disraeli's Works
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AMENITIES OF LITERATURE,

CONSISTING OF

SKETCHES AND CHARACTERS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

BY ISAAC DISRAELI.

A New Edition,

EDITED BY HIS SON,

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CHANCELLOR OF HER MAJESTY'S EXCHEQUER.

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

VOLUME I.

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PREFACE.

A HISTORY of our vernacular literature has occupied my studies for many years. It was my design, not to furnish an arid narrative of books or of authors, but, following the steps of the human mind through the wide track of Time, to trace from their beginnings the rise, the progress, and the decline of public opinions, and to illustrate, as the objects presented themselves, the great incidents in our national annals.

In the progress of these researches, many topics presented themselves, some of which, from their novelty and curiosity, courted investigation. Literary history, in this enlarged circuit, becomes not merely a philological history of critical erudition, but ascends into a philosophy of books, where their subjects, their tendency, and their immediate or gradual influence over the people, discover their actual condition.

Authors are the creators or the creatures of opinion: the great form an epoch, the many reflect their age. With them the transient becomes permanent, the suppressed lies open; and they are the truest representatives of their nation for those very passions with which they are themselves infected. The pen of the ready writer transmits to us the public and the domestic story, and thus books become the intellectual history of a people. As authors are scattered through all the ranks of society, among the governors and the governed, and the objects of their pursuits are usually carried on by their own peculiar idiosyncrasy, we are deeply interested in the secret connection of the incidents of their lives with their intellectual

habits. In the development of that predisposition which is ever working in characters of native force, all their felicities and their failures, and the fortunes which such men have shaped for themselves, and often for the world, we discover what is not found in biographical dictionaries, — the history of the mind of the individual; and this constitutes the psychology of genius.

In the midst of my studies, I was arrested by the loss of sight: the papers in this collection are a portion of my projected history.

The title prefixed to this work has been adopted to connect it with its brothers, the "Curiosities of Literature," and "Miscellanies of Literature;" but, though the form and manner bear a family resemblance, the subject has more unity of design.

The propriety of the title, I must confess, depends on the graciousness of my readers: the diversified literature in which I have so long indulged is of such late origin in this country, that the species has never obtained a name. Blair entitles his work "Lectures on Rhetoric and *Belles Lettres;*" and Goldsmith, in his review of the modern literature of Europe, calls it "*polite learning.*" The Italians have been more fortunate in describing this class as *la letteratura amena;* and, if it were required to place a classical seal on the term, we might appeal to Pliny, who has given it to literary pursuits in general, *amœnitates studiorum.*

These volumes are not addressed to learned antiquaries, to whose stores it is so difficult to add: I stand gratefully indebted to their labors; for, though I have sometimes held a sickle in their harvest, I am oftener a gleaner in their fields: these volumes are designed for those of my contemporaries, who, amid the diversified acquisitions of this age in science and in art,

some of which had no existence with the public in my youth, are still susceptible of inquiries so intimately connected with the progress of the human mind and of society, which should never be separated. Whoever imagines that he may safely lay aside all the successive efforts of the English mind, as fashions out of date, contracts his faculties within his own day, and can form no adequate conception of that ample inheritance of the intellectual powers bequeathed to us from age to age. To be ignorant of all antiquity is a mutilation of the human mind: it is early associations and local circumstances which give a bent to the mind of a people from their infancy, and insensibly constitute the nationality of genius, separating the manners and feelings of neighboring nations. Even the errors or singularities of our predecessors, the sagacious know, become so many accessions to their experimental knowledge; and, in whatever is excellent, the impulses of our predecessors stand connected with our own. We but continue the chain of human sympathies, whose remotest link, be it ever so backward, supports what is now around us.

There is one more remark in which I must indulge: the author of the present work is denied the satisfaction of reading a single line of it; yet he flatters himself that he shall not trespass on the indulgence he claims for any slight inadvertences. It has been confided to ONE whose eyes unceasingly pursue the volume for him who can no more read, and whose eager hand traces the thought ere it vanish in the thinking; but it is only a father who can conceive the affectionate patience of filial devotion.

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AMENITIES OF LITERATURE.

THE DRUIDICAL INSTITUTION.

ENGLAND, which has given models to Europe of the most masterly productions in every class of learning and every province of genius, so late as within the last three centuries was herself destitute of a national literature. Even enlightened Europe itself, amid the revolving ages of time, is but of yesterday.

How "that was performed in our tongue, which may be compared or preferred either to insolent Greece or haughty Rome,"* becomes a tale in the history of the human mind.

In the history of an insular race, and in a site so peculiar as our own, a people whom the ocean severed from all nations, where are we to seek for our ABORIGINES? A Welsh triad — and a Welsh is presumed to be a British — has commemorated an epoch when these mighty realms were a region of impenetrable forests and impassable morasses, and their sole tenants were wolves, bears, and beavers, and wild cattle. Who were the first human beings in this lone world?

Every people have had a fabulous age. Priests and poets invented, and traditionists expatiated. We discover gods who seem to have been men, or men who resemble gods. We read

* Ben Jonson.

in the form of prose what had once been a poem. Imaginations so wildly constructed, and afterwards as strangely allegorized, served as the milky food of the children of society, quieting their vague curiosity, and circumscribing the illimitable unknown. The earliest epoch of society is unapproachable to human inquiry. Greece, with all her ambiguous poetry, was called "the mendacious;" credulous Rome rested its faith on five centuries of legends; and our Albion dates from that unhistorical period, when, as our earliest historian, the Monk of Monmouth, aiming at probability, affirms, "there were but a few giants in the land,"* and these the more melancholy Gildas, to familiarize us with hell itself, accompanied by "a few devils." Every people, however, long acknowledged, with national pride, beings as fabulous, in those tutelary heroes who bore their own names.

The landing of Brutus with his fugitive Trojans on "the White Island," and here founding a "Troynovant," was one of the results of the immortality of Homer, though it came reflected through his imitator, Virgil, whose Latin, in the mediæval ages, was read when Greek was unknown. The landing of Æneas on the shores of Italy, and the pride of the Romans in their Trojan ancestry, as their flattering epic sanctioned, every modern people, in their jealousy of antiquity, eagerly adopted, and claimed a lineal descent from

* The existence of these *giants* was long historical, and their real origin was in the fourth verse of the fifth chapter of Genesis, which no commentator shall ever explain. Aylet Sammes, in his "Britannia Antiqua Illustrata, or the Antiquities of Ancient Britain derived from the Phœnicians," has particularly noticed "two teeth of a certain giant, of such a huge bigness that two hundred such teeth as men now-a-days have might be cut out of them." Becanus and Camden had, however, observed that "*the bones of sea-fish* had been taken for *giants' bones;* but can it be rationally supposed that men ever entombed fishes?" triumphant in his arguments, exclaims Aylet Sammes. The revelations of geology had not yet been surmised, even by those who had discovered that giants were but sea-fish So progressive is all human knowledge.

some of this spurious progeny of Priam. The idle humor of the learned flattered the imaginations of their countrymen; and each in his own land raised up a fictitious personage, who was declared to have left his name to the people. The excess of their patriotism exposed their forgeries, while every pretended Trojan betrayed a Gothic name. France had its Francion; Ireland, its Iberus; the Danes, their Danus; and the Saxons, their Saxo. The descent of Brutus into Britain is even tenderly touched by so late a writer as our CAMDEN; for, while he abstains from affording us either denial or assent, he expends his costly erudition in furnishing every refutation which had been urged against the preposterous existence of these fabulous founders of every European people.

Such is the corruption of the earliest history, either to gratify the idle pride of a people, or to give completeness to inquiries extending beyond human knowledge. Even BUCHANAN, to gratify the ancestral vanity of his countrymen, has recorded the names of three hundred fabulous monarchs, and presents a nomenclature without an event; and, in his classical Latinity, we must silently drop a thousand unhistorical years. Even HENRY and WHITAKER, in the gravity of English history, sketched the manners and the characteristics of an unchronicled generation from the fragmentary romances of Ossian.

Cæsar imagined that the inhabitants of the interior of Britain, a fiercer people than the dwellers on the coasts, were an indigenous race; but the philosophy of Cæsar did not exceed that of Horace and Ovid, who conceived no other origin of man than *Mater Terra*. Man, indeed, was formed out of "the dust of the ground;" but the Divine Spirit alone could have dictated the history of primeval man in the solitude of Eden. To Cæsar was not revealed that man was an Oriental creature; that a single locality served as the cradle of the human race; and that the generations of man were

the offspring of a single pair, when once "the whole earth was of one language and of one speech." "And there is no antiquity but this that can tell *any other beginning*," exclaims our honest VERSTEGAN, exulting in his Teutonic blood, while furnishing an extraordinary evidence of the retreat of Tuisco and his Teutons from the conspiracy against the skies.*

The dispersion of Babel, and consequently the diversity of languages, is the mysterious link which connects sacred and profane history. There is but a single point whence human nature begins, — the universe has been populated by migrations. Wherever the human being is found, he has been transplanted. However varied in structure and dissimilar in dialect, the first inhabitants of every land were not born there; unlike plants and animals, which seem coeval with the region in which they are found, never removing from the soil they occupy. Thus the miracle of Holy Writ solves the enigmas of philosophical theories, of more than one Adam, of distinct stocks of mankind, and of the mechanism of language, — vague conjectures and contested opinions, which have left us without even a conception how the human being

* The miraculous event was perpetuated by the whole Teutonic people, "while it was fresh in their memories," as our honest Saxon asserts: hence, to this day, we in our Saxon *English*, and our Teutonic kinsmen and neighbors in their idiom, describe a confusion of idle talk by the term of *Babel*, — now written, from our harsh love of supernumerary consonants, *Babble*; and any such workmen of Babel are still indicated as *Babblers*. — "A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence," 138, 4to. Antwerp, 1605.

The erudite Menage offers a memorable evidence of the precarious condition of etymology when it connects things which have no other affinity than that which depends on *sounds*. — See his "Dictionnaire Etymologique, ou Origines de la Langue Françoise," *ad verbum* BABIL. Not satisfied with the usual authorities deduced from *Babel*, this verbal sage appeals to us English to demonstrate the natural connection between *Babbling* and *Childishness*; for thus, he has shrewdly opined, "the English in this manner have *Babble* and *Baby!*"

After all the convulsion of lips at Babel, and confusion among the etymologists, the word is Hebrew, which, with a few more such, are found in many languages.

is white or tawny or sable; or how the first letters of the alphabet are Aleph and Bêt, or Alpha and Beta, or A and B!

In tracing the origin of nations, later speculators have therefore more discreetly, though not wanting in hardy conjectures or fanciful affinities, conducted people after people from the mysterious fount of human existence in the Asian region. Through countless centuries they have followed the myriads, who, propelling each other, took the right or the left, as chance led them. Vanished nations may have received names which they themselves might not have recognized. Kelt or Kimmerian, Scandinavian or Goth, Phœnician or Iberian, have been hurried to the isles of Britain. Their tale is older, though less "divine," than the tale of Troy; and the difficulty remains to unravel the reality of the fabulous. The learned have rarely satisfied their consciences in arranging their dates in the confusion of unnoted time; nor in that other confusion of races, often mingling together under one common appellative, have they always agreed in assigning that ancient people who were the progenitors of the modern nation; and the aborigines have been more than once described as "an ancient people whose name is unknown." In the pride of erudition, and the irascibility of confutation, they have involved themselves in interminable discussions: yet one might be seduced to adopt any hypothesis; for, more or less, each bears some ambiguous evidence or some startling circumstance sufficient to rock the dreaming antiquary, and to kindle the bitter blood of pedantic patriots. The origin of the population of Europe and the first inhabitants of our British isles has produced some antiquarian romances, often ingenious and amusing, till the romances turn out to be mere polemics, and give us angry words amid the most quaint fancies. This theme, still continued, becomes a cavern of antiquity, where, many waving their torches, the light has sometimes fallen on an unperceived angle; but the scattered light has shown the depth and the darkness.

Among those shadows of time, we grasp at one certainty Whoever might be the first-comers to this solitary island, when we obtain any knowledge of the inhabitants, we are struck by their close resemblance to those tribes of savage life whom our navigators have discovered, and who are now found in almost a primitive state, among that innumerable cluster of what has recently been designated the Polynesian Isles. The aborigines of Britain took the same modes of existence, and fell into similar customs. We discover their rude population divided into jealous tribes, in perpetual battle with one another. They lived in what Hobbes has called the *status belli*, with no notion of the *meum* and *tuum;* in the same community of their women as was found in Otaheite;* and with the same ignorance of property, when its representative in some form was not yet invented. Our aborigines resembled these races even in their personal appearance. A Polynesian chief has been drawn and colored after the life; and the figure exhibits the perfect picture of an ancient Briton, almost naked, the body painted red. The British savage chose blue, and made deep incisions in the flesh to insert his indelible woad.†

* Julia, the empress of Severus, once in raillery remonstrated with a British female against this singular custom, which annulled every connubial tie. The British woman, whose observation had evidently been enlarged during her visit to Rome, retorted by her disdain of the more polished corruption of the greater nation. "We British women greatly differ from the Roman ladies; for we follow in public the men whom we esteem the most worthy, while the Roman women yield themselves secretly to the vilest of men."

Such was the noble sentiment which broke forth from a lady of savage education. It was, however, but a savage's view of social life. This female Briton had not felt how much remained of life which she had not taken into her view. When the attractions of her sex had ceased, and the season of flowers had passed, she was left without her connubial lord, amid a progeny who had no father.

† This practice of savage races may have originated in a natural circumstance. The naked body, by this slight covering, is protected from the atmosphere, from insects, and other inconveniences to which the unclothed are exposed. But though it may not have been considered merely as personal finery, which seems sometimes to have been the case, it became a

The fierce eye and the bearded lip, with the long hair scattered to the waist, exhibit the Briton as he was seen by Cæsar, and, a century afterwards, as the British monarch Caractacus appeared before the Emperor Claudius at Rome. His sole ornaments consisted of an iron collar and an iron girdle; but as his naked majesty had his skin painted with figures of animals, however rudely, this was probably a distinctive dress of British royalty. These Britons lived in thick woods, herding among circular huts of reed, as we find other tribes in this early state of society; and submissive to the absolute dominion of a priesthood of magicians, as we find even among the Esquimaux; and performing sanguinary rites similar to those of the ancient Mexicans. We are struck with the conviction, that men in a parallel condition remain but uniform beings.

It seems a solecism in the intellectual history of man to discover among such a semi-barbarous people a government of sages, who, we are assured, "invented and taught such philosophy and other learning as were never read of nor heard of by any men before."* This paradoxical incident deepens in mystery when we are to be taught that the Druidical institution of Britain was Pythagorean or patriarchal or Brahminical. The presumed encyclopedic knowledge which this order possessed, and the singular customs which they practised, have afforded sufficient analogies and affinities to maintain the occult and remote origin of Druidism. Nor has this notion been the mere phantom of modern system-makers. It was a subject of inquiry among the ancients, whether the Druids had received

refinement of barbarism when they painted their bodies frightfully to look terrible to the enemy.

* See Mr. Tate's twelve questions about the Druids, with Mr. Jones's answers; a learned Welsh scholar, who commented on the ancient laws of his nation. — TOLAND'S *History of the Druids.*

A later Welsh scholar affirms, "Beyond all doubt, there has been an era when science diffused a light among the Cymry, in a very early period of the world." — OWEN'S *Heroic Elegies of Llywarç Hen.* Preface, xxi.

This style is traditional, and still kept up among Welsh and Irish scholars, who seem familiar with an antiquity beyond record.

their singular art of teaching by secret initiation, and the prohibition of all writing, with their doctrine of the pre-existence and transmigration of souls, from Pythagoras; or whether this philosopher, in his universal travels, had not alighted among the Druids, and had passed through their initiation.* This discussion is not yet obsolete, and it may still offer all the gust of novelty. A Welsh antiquary, according to the spirit of Welsh antiquity, insists that the Druidical system of the Metempsychosis was conveyed to the Brahmins of India by a former emigration from Wales; but the reverse may have occurred, if we trust the elaborate researches which copiously would demonstrate that the Druids were a scion of the Oriental family.† Every point of the Druidical history, from its mysterious antiquity, may terminate with reversing the proposition. A recent writer confidently intimated that the knowledge of Druidism must be searched for in the Talmudical writings; but another, in return, asserts that the Druids were older than the Jews.

Whence and when the British Druids transplanted themselves to this lone world amid the ocean, bringing with them all the wisdom of far antiquity to an uncivilized race, is one of those events in the history of man which no historian can write. It is evident that they long preserved what they had brought; since the Druids of Gaul were fain to resort to the Druids of Britain to renovate their instruction.

The Druids have left no record of themselves; they seem to have disdained an immortality separate from the existence

* Toland's "History of the Druids," in his Miscellaneous Works, ii. 163.

† "The Celtic Druids, or an Attempt to show that the Druids were the Priests of Oriental Colonies, who emigrated from India." By Godfrey Higgins, Esq. London, 1829.

This is a quarto volume abounding with recondite researches and many fancies. It is more repulsive, by the absurd abuse of "the Christian priests who destroyed their (the Druids') influence, and unnerved the arms of their gallant followers." There are philosophical fanatics.

of their order: but the shadow of their glory is reflected for ever in the verse of Lucan and the prose of Cæsar. The poet imagined, that, if the knowledge of the gods was known to man, it had been alone revealed to these priests of Britain. The narrative of the historian is comprehensive: but, with all the philosophical cast of his mind and the intensity of his curiosity, Cæsar was not a Druid;* and only a Druid could have written, had he dared, on DRUIDHEACHT, — a sacred, unspeakable word, at which the people trembled in their veneration.

The British Druids constituted a sacred and a secret society, religious, political, and literary. In the rude mechanism of society in a state of pupilage, the first elements of government, however gross or even puerile, were the levers to lift and to sustain the unhewn masses of the barbaric mind. Invested with all privileges and immunities, amid that transient omnipotence which man in his first feeble condition can confer, the wild children of society crouched together before those illusions which superstition so easily forges. But the supernatural dominion lay in the secret thoughts of the people: the marauder had not the daring to touch the open treasure as it lay in the consecrated grove; and a single word from a Druid for ever withered a human being, "cut down like grass." The loyalty of the land was a religion of wonder and fear, and to dispute with a Druid was a state crime.

They were a secret society, for whatever was taught was forbidden to be written; and not only their doctrines and

* Cæsar was a keen observer of the Britons. He characterizes the Kentish men, *Ex his omnibus longè sunt humanissimi*, — "Of all this people, the Kentish are far the most humane." Cæsar describes the British boats to have the keel and masts of the lightest wood, and their bodies of wicker covered with leather: and the hero and sage was taught a lesson by the barbarians; for Cæsar made use of these in Spain to transport his soldiers, — a circumstance which Lucan has recorded. In the size and magnitude of Britain, confiding to the exaggerated accounts of the captives, he was mistaken; but he acknowledges, that many things he heard of, he had not himself observed.

their sciences were veiled in this sacred obscurity, but the laws which governed the community were also oral. For the people, the laws, probably, were impartially administered: for the Druids were not the people; and, without their sympathies, these judges at least sided with no party. But if these sages, amid the conflicting interests of the multitude, seemed placed above the vicissitudes of humanity, their own more solitary passions were the stronger, violently compressed within a higher sphere. Ambition, envy, and revenge, those curses of nobler minds, often broke their dreams. The election of an arch-Druid was sometimes to be decided by a battle. Some have been chronicled by a surname which indicates a criminal. No king could act without a Druid by his side, for peace or war were on his lips; and, whenever the order made common cause, woe to the kingdom! * It was a terrible hierarchy. The golden knife which pruned the mistletoe beneath the mystic oak immolated the human victim.

The Druids were the common fathers of the British youth, for they were the sole educators; but the genius of the order admitted of no inept member. For the acolyte unendowed with the faculty of study, all initiation ceased: Nature herself had refused this youth the glory of Druidism; but he was taught the love of his country. The Druidical lyre kindled patriotism through the land, and the land was saved — for the Druids!

The Druidical custom of unwritten instruction was ingeniously suggested by Cicero, as designed to prevent their secret doctrines from being divulged to those unworthy or ill fitted to receive them, and to strengthen the memory of their votaries by its continued exercise: but we may suspect, that this barbarous custom of this most ancient sodality began at a period when they themselves neither read nor wrote, destitute of an

* Toland's "Hist. of the Druids," 56.

alphabet of their own; for, when the Druids had learned from the Greeks their characters, they adopted them in all their public and private affairs. We learn that the Druidical sciences were contained in twenty thousand verses, which were to prompt their perpetual memory. Such traditional science could not be very progressive: what was to be got by rote no disciple would care to consider obsolete, and a century might elapse without furnishing an additional couplet. The Druids, like some other institutions of antiquity, by not perpetuating their doctrines or their secrets in this primeval state of theology and philosophy by writing, have effectually concealed their own puerile simplicity; but the monuments of a people remain to perpetuate their character. We may judge of the genius or state of the Druidical arts and sciences by such objects. We are told that the Druids were so wholly devoted to nature, that they prohibited the use of any tool in the construction of their rude works: all are unhewn masses, or heaps of stones. Such are their cairns and cromleches and corneddes, and that wild architecture whose stones hang on one another, still frowning on the plains of Salisbury.* A circle of stones marked the consecrated limits of the Druidical tribunal; and

* The origin of Stonehenge is as unknown as that of the Pyramids. As it is evident that those huge masses could not have been raised and fixed without the machinery of art, Mr. Owen, the Welsh antiquary, infers that this building (if such it may be called) could not have been erected till that later period when the Druidical genius declined and submitted to Christianity, and the Druids were taught more skilful masonry in stone, though without mortar. It has been, however, considered that those masses which have been ascribed to the necromancer Merlin, or the more ancient giants, might have been the work of the Britons themselves, who, without our knowledge of the mechanical powers in transporting or raising ponderous bodies, it is alleged were men of mighty force and stature, whose co-operation might have done what would be difficult even to our mechanical science. The lances, helmets, and swords of these Britons show the vast size and strength of those who wore them. The native Americans, as those in Peru, unaided by the engines we apply to those purposes, have raised up such vast stones in building their temples, as the architect of the present time would not perhaps hazard the attempt to remove. — *Essays by a Society at Exeter* 114.

in the midst, a hillock heaped up for the occasion was the judgment-seat. Here, in the open air, — in "the eye of light and the face of the sun," to use the bardic style, — the decrees were pronounced, and the Druids harangued the people. Such a scene was exhibited by the Hebrew patriarchs, from whom some imagined these Druids descended: but whether or not the Celtic be of this origin, we must not decide by any analogous manners or customs, because these are nearly similar wherever we trace a primitive race; so uniform is Nature, till Art, infinitely various, conceals Nature herself.

In the depth of antiquity, misty superstition and pristine tradition gave a false magnitude to the founders of human knowledge; and our own literary historians, who have been over-curious about "the Genesis" of their antiquities, have inveigled us into the mystic groves of Druidism in all their cloudy obscurity. The "Antiquities of the University of Oxford" open with "the Originals of Learning in this Nation;" and our antiquary discerns the first shadowings of the University of Oxford in "the universal knowledge" of the Druidical institution in "ethics, politics, civil law, divinity, and poetry." Such are the reveries of an antiquary.

BRITAIN AND THE BRITONS.

BRITAIN stood as the boundary of the universe, beyond which all was air and water; and long it was ere the trembling coasters were certain whether Britain was an island or a continent, — a secret, probably, to the dispersed natives themselves. It was the triumphant fleet of Agricola, nearly a century after the descent of Cæsar, which, encircling it, proclaimed to the universe that Britain was an island. From that day, Albion has lifted its white head, embraced by the restless ocean; but, often betrayed by that treacherous guardian, she became the possession of successive races.

Nations have derived their names from some accidental circumstance; some peculiarity marking their national character, or descriptive of the site of their country. The names of our island and of our islanders have exercised the inquiries, and too often the ingenuity, of our antiquarian etymologists. There are about half a hundred origins of the name of Britain, some absurd, many fanciful, all uncertain.* Our primitive ancestors distinguished themselves, in pride or simplicity, as *Brith* and *Brithon: Brith* signified "stained," and *Brithon* "a stained man," according to Camden.† The predi-

* See the opening of Speed's "Chronicle."

† The historian of our land, in the solemnity of his high office, unwilling that an obscure Welsh prince named *Prydain* should have left his immemorable name to this glorious realm, as a Welsh triad professes, was delighted to draw the national name out of the native tongue, appositely descriptive of the prevalent custom; but when, seduced by this siren of etymology, our grave Camden, to display the passion of a painted people for colors, collects a long list of ancient British names of polysyllabic

lection for coloring their bodies induced the civilized Romans to designate the people who were driven to the Caledonian forests as *Picts*, or a painted people.

That the native term of *Brith*, or *Brithon*, by its curt harshness, would clash on the modulating ear of the Greek voyager or the Latin poet, seems probable; for by them it was amplified. And thus we owe to sonorous antiquity the name now famous as their own; for BRITANNIA first appeared in their writings, bequeathed to us by the masters of the world as their legacy of glory.

To the knowledge of the Romans, the island exceeded in magnitude all other islands; and they looked on this land with pride and anxiety, while they dignified Britain as the "Roman island." The Romans even personified the insular genius with poetic conceptions. Britannia is represented as a female seated on a rock, armed with a spear; or leaning on a prow, while the ship beside her attests her naval power. We may yet be susceptible of the prophetic flattery, when we observe the Roman has also seated her on a globe, with the symbol of military power, and the ocean rolling under her feet.*

The tale of these ancient Britons, who should have been our ancestors, is told by the philosophical historian of antiquity. Under successive Roman governors, they still remained divided by native factions: "A circumstance," observes Tacitus, "most useful for us, among such a powerful people, where, each combating singly, all are subdued." A century, as we have said, had not elapsed from the landing of Cæsar to the administration of Agricola. That enlightened

elongation, and culls from each a single syllable, which, by its sound, he conceives alludes to blue or red or yellow, our sage, in proving more than was requisite, has encumbered his cause, and has thrown suspicion over the whole. The doom of the etymologist, so often duped by affinity of *sounds*, seems to have been that of our judicious Camden.

* Evelyn's "Numismata." Pinkerton has engraven ten of these Britannias, struck by the Romans, in his "Essay on Medals."

general changed the policy of former governors. He allured the Britons from their forest retreats and reedy roofs, to partake of the pleasures of a Roman city, to dwell in houses, to erect lofty temples, and to indulge in dissolving baths. The barbarian who had scorned the Roman tongue now felt the ambition of Roman eloquence, and the painted Briton of Cæsar was enveloped in the Roman toga. Severus, in another century after Agricola, as an extraordinary evidence of his successful government, appealed to Britain: "Even the Britons are quiet!" exclaimed the emperor. The tutelary genius of Rome through four centuries preserved Britain even from the Britons themselves: but the Roman policy was fatal to the national character; and, when the day arrived that their protector forsook them, the Britons were left among their ancient discords. For provincial jealousies, however concealed by circumstances, are never suppressed: the fire lives in its embers, ready to be kindled.

The island of Britain, itself not extensive, was broken into petty principalities. We are told that there were nearly two hundred kinglings, the greater part of whom did not presume to wear crowns. Sometimes they united in their jealousies of some paramount tyrant; but they raged among themselves: and the passion of Gildas has figured them as "the Lioness of Devonshire" encountering a "Lion's Whelp" in Dorsetshire; and "the Bear-baiter," trembling before his regal brother, "the Great Bull-dog." "These kings were not appointed by God!" exclaims the British Jeremiah, — he who wrote under the name of Gildas. Thus the Britons formed a powerless aggregate, and never a nation. The naked Irish haunted their shores, covering their sea with piracy; and the Picts rushed from their forests, — giants of the North, who, if Gildas does not exaggerate, even dragged down from their walls the amazed Britons. Such a people, in their terrified councils, were to be suppliants to the valor of foreigners: from that hour they were doomed to be chased from their

natal soil. They invited, or they encouraged, another race to become their mercenaries or their allies. The small and the great from other shores hastened to a new dominion. Britain then became "a field of fortune to every adventurer, when nothing less than kingdoms were the prize of every fortunate commander."*

We have now the history of a people whose enemies inhabited their ancient land: the flame and the sword ceaselessly devouring the soil; their dominion shrinking in space, and the people diminishing in number. Victory for them was fatal as defeat. The disasters of the Britons pursued them through the despair of almost two centuries. It would have been the history of a whole people ever retreating, yet hardly in flight, had it been written. Shall we refuse, on the score of their disputed antiquity, the evidence of the Welsh bards? The wild grandeur of the melancholy poetry of those ancient Britons attests the reality of their story and the depth of their emotions.†

We have spun the last thread of our cobweb; and we know not on what points it hangs, such irreconcilable hypotheses are offered to us by our learned antiquaries, whenever they would account for the origin or the disappearance of a whole people. The mystery deepens, and the confusion darkens amid contradictions and incredibilities, when the British historian contemplates in the perspective the Fata Morgana of another Britain on the opposite shores of the ancient Armorica, another Britain in La Brétagne.

The ancient Armorica was a district extending from the Loire to the Seine, about sixty leagues; and except on the land side, which joined Poictou, is encircled by the ocean. Composed of several small states, in the decline of the Roman Empire they shook off the Roman yoke; and their independ-

* Milton.

† See Mr. Turner's able "Vindication of the Genuineness of the Ancient British Bards."

ence was secured by the obscurity of their sequestered locality.

The tale runs, that Maximus, having engaged his provincial Britons in his ambitious schemes, rewarded their military aid by planting them in one of these Armorican communities. To give color to this tradition, the story adds that this Roman general had a considerable interest in Wales; "having married the daughter of a powerful chieftain, whose chapel at Carnarvon is still shown."* The marriage of this future Roman emperor with a Welsh princess would serve as an embellishment to a Welsh genealogy. This event must have occurred about the year 384. When the Britons were driven out of their country by faithless allies, Armorica would offer an easy refuge for fugitives: there they found brothers already settled, or friends willing to receive them.†

In this uncertainty of history, amid the dreams of theoretical antiquaries, we cannot doubt that at some time there was a powerful colony of Britons in Armorica. They acquired dominion as well as territory. They changed that masterless Armorican state, to which they were transplanted, from an

* Warton draws his knowledge from Rowland's "Mona Antiqua." Geoffry of Monmouth would have extended his inquiry. Camden, judicious as he was, has actually bestowed the kingdom, as well as the princess, on this Roman general; and Gibbon has sarcastically noticed, that Camden has been authority for all "his blind followers." The source of this sort of history lies in the volume of the "Monk of Monmouth," where Gibbon might have found the number of the numerous army of Maximus. Rowland's "Mona Antiqua Restaurata" is one of the most extraordinary pieces of our British antiquities. It is written with the imbrowned rust of our old English antiquaries, where nothing on a subject seems to be omitted: but our author, unlike his contemporary antiquaries, is sceptical even on his own acquisitions; he asserts little, and assumes nothing. One may conceive the native simplicity of an author, who, having to describe the Isle of Anglesey, opens his work with the history of Chaos itself, to explain, by the division of land and water, the origin of islands. I have heard that this learned antiquary never travelled from his native island.

† "L'Art de vérifier les Dates," article *Brétagne*, is thrown into utter confusion. It seems, however, to indicate that there were many migrations but all is indistinct or uncertain.

aristocracy into a monarchy, — that government to which they had been accustomed: they consecrated the strange land by the baptism of their own national name; and to this day it is called Brétagne, or Britain. And surely the Britons carried with them all their home-affections; for they made the new country an image of the old. Not only had they stamped on it the British name, but the Britons of Cornwall called a considerable district by their own provincial name, known in France as "Le Pays de Cornouaille;" and their speech perpetuated their vernacular Celtic. At the siege of Belleisle, in 1756, the honest Britons of the principality among our soldiers were amazed to find that they and the peasants of Brittany were capable of conversing together. This expatriation reminds us of the emotions of the first settlers in the New World. Ancient Spain reflected herself in her New Spain; and our first emigrants called their "plantations" "New England," distributing local names borrowed from the land of their birth, — undying memorials of their parent source.

This singular event in the civil annals of the ancient Britons has given rise to a circumstance unparalleled in the literary history of every people; for it has often involved in a mysterious confusion a part of our literary and historical antiquities. The Britain in France is not always discriminated from our own; and this double Britain at times becomes provokingly mystifying. Two eminent antiquaries, Douce and Ritson, sometimes conceived that Brétagne meant England, — a circumstance which might upset a whole hypothesis.

In the fastnesses of Wales, on the heights of Caledonia, and on the friendly land of Armorica, are yet tracked the fugitive and ruined Britons. It is most generally conceded, that they retreated to the western coasts of England; and that, often discomfited, they took their last refuge in those "mountain heights" of Cambria.

Their shadowy Arthur has left an undying name in romance, and is a nonenity in history. Whether Arthur was a

mortal commander heading some kings of Britain, or whether religion and policy were driven to the desperate effort for rallying their fugitives by a national name, and "a hope deferred," like the Sebastian of Portugal, this far-famed chieftain could never have been a fortunate general. He displayed his invincibility but in some obscure and remote locality. He struck no terror among his enemies, for they have left his name unchronicled; nor, living, have the bards distinguished his pre-eminence. "The grave of Arthur is a mystery of the world," exclaimed Taliessin, the great bard of the Britons. But the mortal who vanished in the cloud of conflict had never seen death; and to the last the Britons awaited for the day of their Redeemer, when Arthur should return in his immortality, accompanied by "the Flood-king of the Deluge," from the Inys Avallon, the Isle of the Mystic Apple-tree, their Eden or their Elysium. Arthur was a myth, half-Christian and half-Druidical. In Armorica, as in Wales, his coming was long expected, till "Espérance brétonne" became proverbial for all chimerical hopes.

Thus the aborigines of this island vanished; but their name is still attached to us. The Anglo-Saxons became our progenitors, and the Saxon our mother-tongue: yet so complex and incongruous is the course of time, that we still call ourselves Britons and "true Britons;" and the land we dwell in, Great Britain. Nor is it less remarkable, that the days of the Christian week commemorate the names of seven Saxon idols.* There are improbabilities and incongruities in authentic history as hard to reconcile as any we meet with in wild romance.

During six centuries, the Saxons and the Normans combined to banish from the public mind the history of the Britons: it was lost; it did not exist even among the Britons in Wales. In the reign of Henry the First, an archdeacon of

* Verstegan has finely engraved these idols in his "Restitution;" so delighted was this Teutonic Christian with these hideous absurdities of his pagan ancestors, and so proud of his Saxon descent.

Oxford, who was that king's justiciary, being curious in ancient histories, opportunely brought out of "Britain in France" "a very ancient book in the British tongue." This book, which still forms the Gordian knot of the antiquary, he confided to the safe custody and fertile genius of Geoffry, the Monk of Monmouth. It contained a regular story of the British kings, opening with Brute, the great-grandson of Priam in this airy generation; kings who, Geoffry "had often wondered, were wholly unnoticed by Gildas and Bede." "Yet," adds our historian, "their deeds were celebrated by many people in a *pleasant manner*, and *by heart, as if they had been written.*" This remarkable sentence aptly describes that species of national songs which the early poets have always provided for the people, — traditions which float before history is written. Whether this very ancient British book, almost five centuries old, was a volume of these poetical legends, which our historian might have arranged into that "regular history" which is furnished by his Latin prose version, we are left without the means of ascertaining; since it proved to be the only copy ever found, and was never seen after the day of the translation. The Monk of Monmouth does not arrogate to himself any other merit than that of a faithful translator; and, with honest simplicity, warns of certain additions, which, even in a history of two thousand years contained in a small volume, were found necessary.

We are told that the Britons who passed over into France carried with them "their archives." But there were other Britons who did not fly to the sixty leagues of Armorica; and of these the only "archives" we hear of are those which the romancers so perpetually assure us may be consulted at Caer leon, or some other magical residence of the visionary Arthur The Armorican colony must have formed but a portion of the Britons; and it would be unreasonable to suppose, that these fugitives could, by any human means, sequestrate and appropriate for themselves the whole history of the nation, without

leaving a fragment behind. Yet nothing resembling the Armorican originals has been traced among the Welsh. Our Geoffry modestly congratulates his contemporary annalists, while he warns them off the preserve where lies his own well-stocked game. And thus he speaks: "The history of the kings who were the successors in Wales of those here recorded I leave to Karadoc of Lancarven, as I do also the kings of the Saxons to William of Malmesbury, and Henry of Huntingdon; but I advise them to be silent concerning the British kings, since they have not that book written in the British tongue, which Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, brought out of Britain." Well might Geoffry exult: he possessed the sole copy ever found in both the Britains.

The British history is left to speak for itself in a great simplicity of narrative, where even the supernatural offers no obstacle to the faith of the historian, — a history which might fascinate a child as well as an antiquary. These remote occurrences are substantiated by the careful dates of a romantic chronology. Events are recorded which happened when David reigned in Judæa, and Sylvius Latinus in Italy, and Gad, Nathan, and Asaph prophesied in Israel; and the incidents of Lear's pathetic story occurred when Isaiah and Hosea flourished, and Rome was built by the two brothers. It tells of one of the British monarchs, how the lady of his love was concealed during seven years in a subterraneous palace. On his death, his avengeful queen cast the mother and her daughter into the river which still bears that daughter's name, — Sabrina, or the Severn; and was not forgotten by Drayton. Another incident adorns a canto of Spenser: the Lear came down to Shakspeare, as the fraternal feuds of Ferrex and Porrex created our first tragedy by Sackville. There are other tales which by their complexion betray their legendary origin.

Whatever assumed the form of history was long deemed authentic: and such was the authority of this romance of Geoffry,

that, when Edward the First claimed the crown of Scotland in his letter to the pope, he founded his right on a passage in Geoffry's book. Doubtless this very passage was held to be as veracious by the Scots themselves, only that on this occasion they decided to fight against the text. Four centuries after Geoffry had written, when Henry the Seventh appointed a commission to draw up his pedigree, they traced the royal descent from the imaginary Brutus; and, reckoning all Geoffry's British kings in the line, — the fairies of history, — made the English monarch a descendant in the hundredth degree. We now often hear of "the fabulous" History of Geoffry of Monmouth; but neither his learned translator in 1718, nor the most eminent Welsh antiquaries, attach any such notion to a history crowded with domestic events, and with names famous, yet unknown.

After the lapse of so many centuries, the scrutinizing investigation of a thoughtful explorer in British antiquities has demonstrated, through a chain of recondite circumstances, that this History of Geoffry of Monmouth, and its immediate predecessor, the celebrated Chronicle of the pseudo-Archbishop Turpin, were sent forth on the same principle on which to this day we publish party pamphlets, — to influence the spirit of two great nations opposed in interest and glory to each other; in a word, that they were two Tales of a Tub, thrown out to busy those mighty whales, France and England.*

One great result of their successful grasp of the popular feelings could never have been contemplated by these grave forgers of fabulous history. The Chronicle of Archbishop Turpin and the British History of Geoffry of Monmouth became the parents of those two rival families of romances which commemorate the deeds of the Paladins of Charlemagne and the Knights of Arthur, the delight of three centuries.

The Welsh of this day possess very ancient manuscripts, which they cherish as the remains of the ancient Britons.

* Turner's "History of England during the Middle Ages," iv. 326.

These preserve the deep strains of poets, composed in triumph or in defeat, — the poetry of a melancholy race. Gray first attuned the Cymry harp to British notes, more poetical than the poems themselves; while others have devoted their pens to translation, unhappily not always master of the language of their version. These manuscripts contain also a remarkable body of fiction in the "MABINOGION," or juvenile amusements, a collection of prose tales combining the marvellous and the imaginative. Some are chivalric and amatory, stamped with the manners and customs of the middle ages; others, apparently of a much higher antiquity, like all such national remains, are considered mythological; some there are not well adapted, perhaps, to the initiation of youth. Obviously, they are nothing more than short romances; but we are solemnly assured that the "Mabinogion" abound with occult mysteries, and that simple fiction only served to allure the British neophyte to bardic mysticism. A learned writer, who is apt to view old things in a new light, and whose boldness invigorates the creeping toil of the antiquary, reveals the esoteric doctrine, — "The childhood alluded to in their title is an early and preparatory stage of initiation: they were calculated to inflame curiosity, to exercise ingenuity, and lead the aspirant gradually into a state of preparation for things which ears not long and carefully disciplined were unfit to hear." *

* "Britannia after the Romans." The literary patriotism of Wales has been more remarkable among humble individuals than among the squirearchy, if we except the ardent Pennant. Mr. Owen Jones, an honest furrier in Thames Street, kindled by the love of fatherland, offered the Welsh public a costly present of the "Archæology of Wales," containing the bardic poetry, genealogies, triads, chronicles, &c., in their originals. The haughty descendant of the Cymry disdained to translate for the Anglo-Saxon. To Mr. William Owen the lore of Cambria stands deeply indebted for his persevering efforts. Under the name of Meirion, he long continued his literal versions of the Welsh bards in the early volumes of the "Monthly Magazine." He has furnished a Cambrian biography and a dictionary.

Some years ago, a learned Welsh scholar, Dr. Owen Pughe, issued proposals to publish the "Mabinogion," accompanied by translations, on the

Every people have tales which do not require to be written to be remembered, whose shortness is the salt which preserves them through generations. Our ancestors long had heard of "Breton lays" and "British tales," from the days of Chaucer to those of Milton; but it was reserved for our own day to ascertain the species, and to possess those forgotten yet imaginative effusions of the ancient Celtic genius. Our literary antiquaries have discovered reposing among the Harleian manuscripts the writings of Marie de France,* an Anglo-Norman poetess, who, in the thirteenth century, versified many old Breton lais, which, she says, "she had heard and well remembered." Who can assure us whether this Anglo-Norman poetess gathered her old tales (for such she calls them) in the French Britain or the English Britain, where she always resided?

It is among the Welsh we find a singular form of artificial memory which can be traced among no other people. These are their TRIADS. Though unauthorized by the learned in Celtic antiquities, I have sometimes fancied that in the form we may possess a relic of Druidical genius. A triad is formed by classing together three things, neither more nor less, but supposed to bear some affinity; though a fourth or fifth might occur with equal claim to be admitted into the category.† To connect three things together apparently analogous, though in

completion of a subscription-list sufficient to indemnify the costs of printing. — See Mr. Crofton Croker's interesting work on "Fairy Legends," vol. iii. He appealed in vain to the public; but the whole loss remains with them Recently, a munificent lady (Lady Charlotte Guest) has resumed the task, and has presented us, in the most elegant form, with two tales such as ladies read. Since this note was written, several cheering announcements of some important works have been put forth. [Many have since been published.]

* See Warton and Ellis. "Poésies de Marie de France" have been published by M. de Roquefort, Paris, 1820.

† "The translators do the triadist an injustice in rendering *tri* by '*the three*,' when he has put no *the* at all. The number was accounted fortunate, and they took a pleasure in binding up all their ideas into little sheaves or fasciculi of three; but, in so doing, they did not mean to imply that there were no more such." — *Britannia after the Romans.*

reality not so, sufficed for the stores of knowledge of a triadist: but to fix on any three incidents for an historical triad discovered a very narrow range of research; and, if designed as an artificial memory, three insulated facts, deprived of dates or descriptions or connection, neither settled the chronology, nor enlarged the understanding. It is, however, worthy of remark, that, when the triad is of an ethical cast, the number *three* may compose an excellent aphorism; for three things may be predicated with poignant concision, when they relate to our moral qualities or to the intellectual faculties. In this capricious form, the triad has often afforded an enduring principle of human conduct or of critical discrimination; for our feelings are less problematical than historical events, and more permanent than the recollection of three names.*

* As these artificial associations, like the topics invented by the Roman rhetoricians, have been ridiculed by those who have probably formed their notions from unskilful versions, I select a few which might enter into the philosophy of the human mind. They denote a literature far advanced in critical refinement, and appear to have been composed from the sixth to the twelfth century.

"The three foundations of genius: the gift of God, human exertion, and the events of life."

"The three first requisites of genius: an eye to see nature, a heart to feel it, and a resolution that dares follow it."

"The three things indispensable to genius: understanding, meditation, and perseverance."

"The three things that improve genius: proper exertion, frequent exertion, and successful exertion."

"The three qualifications of poetry: endowment of genius, judgment from experience, and felicity of thought."

"The three pillars of judgment: bold design, frequent practice, and frequent mistakes."

"The three pillars of learning: seeing much, suffering much, and studying much." — See Turner's "Vindication of the Ancient British Bards;" Owen's "Dissertation on Bardism, prefixed to the Heroic Elegies of Llywarç Hen."

THE

NAME OF ENGLAND AND OF THE ENGLISH

Two brothers and adventurers of an obscure Saxon tribe raised their ensign of the White Horse on British land. The visit was opportune, or it was expected: this remains a state secret. Welcomed by the British monarch and his perplexed council amid their intestine dissensions as friendly allies, they were renowned for their short and crooked swords called *Seax*, which had given the generic name of Saxons to their tribe.

These descendants of Woden (for such even the petty chieftains deemed themselves), whose trade was battle, and whose glory was pillage, showed the spiritless what men do who know to conquer the few against the many. They baffled the strong, and they annihilated the weak. The Britons were grateful. The Saxons lodged in the land till they took possession of it. The first Saxon founded the kingdom of Kent; twenty years after, a second in Sussex raised the kingdom of the South Saxons; in another twenty years appeared the kingdom of the West Saxons. It was a century after the earliest arrival that the great emigration took place. The tribe of the Angles depopulated their native province, and flocked to the fertile island under that foeman of the Britons whom the bards describe as "the Flame-bearer" and "the Destroyer." Every quality peculiar to the Saxons was hateful to the Britons; even their fairness of complexion. Taliessin terms Hengist "a white-bellied hackney," and his followers

are described as of "hateful hue and hateful form." The British poet delights to paint "a Saxon shivering and quaking, his *white hair* washed in blood;" and another sings how "close upon the backs of the *pale-faced* ones were the spear-points."*

Already the name itself of *Britain* had disappeared among the invaders. Our island was now called "Saxony beyond the sea," or "West Saxon land;" and, when the expatriated Saxons had alienated themselves from the land of their fathers, those who remained faithful to their native hearths perhaps proudly distinguished themselves as "the old Saxons;" for by this name they were known by the Saxons in Britain.

Eight separate but uncertain kingdoms were raised on the soil of Britain, and present a movable surface of fraternal wars and baffled rivals. There was one kingdom long left kingless; for "no man dared, though never so ambitious, to take up the sceptre which many had found so hot, — the only effectual cure of ambition that I have read:" these are the words of Milton. Finally, to use the quaint phrase of the Chancellor Whitelock, "the octarchy was brought into one." At the end of five centuries, the Saxons fell prostrate before a stronger race.

But, of all the accidents and the fortunes of the Saxon dynasty, not the least surprising is that an obscure town in the duchy of Sleswick, *Anglen*, is commemorated by the transference of its name to one of the great European nations. The *Angles*, or *Engles*, have given their denomination to the land of Britain: *Engle-land* is *England*, and the *Engles* are the *English*.†

* "Britannia after the Romans," 62, 4to.

† It is a singular circumstance, that our neighbors have preserved the name of our country more perfectly than we have done by our mutilated term of *England;* for they write it with antiquarian precision, *Angle-terre*, — the land of the Angles. Our counties bear the vestiges of these Saxons expelling or exterminating the native Britons, as our pious Camden ejaculates, "by God's wonderful providence"

How it happened that the very name of *Britain* was abolished, and why the Anglian was selected in preference to the more eminent race, may offer a philosophical illustration of the accidental nature of LOCAL NAMES.

There is a tale familiar to us from youth, that Egbert, the more powerful king of the West Saxons, was crowned the first monarch of England, and issued a decree that this kingdom of Britain should be called England; yet an event so strange as to have occasioned the change of the name of the whole country remains unauthenticated by any of the original writers of our annals.* No record attests that Egbert in a solemn coronation assumed the title of "King of England." His son and successor never claimed such a legitimate title; and even our illustrious Alfred, subsequently, only styled himself "King of the West Saxons."

The story, however, is of ancient standing: for Matthew of Westminster alludes to a similar if not the same incident; namely, that, by "a common decree of all the Saxon kings, it was ordained that the title of the island should no longer be Britain, from Brute, but henceforward be called from the English, England." Stowe furnishes a positive circumstance in this obscure transaction: "Egbert caused the brazen image of Cadwaline, King of the Britons, to be thrown down." The decree noticed by Matthew of Westminster, combined with the fact of pulling down the statue of a popular British monarch, betrays the real motive of this singular national change. Whether it were the suggestion of Egbert, or the unanimous agreement of the assembled monarchs who were his tributary kings, it was a stroke of deep political wis-

* The diligent investigator of the history of our Anglo-Saxons concludes that this unauthorized tale of the coronation and the decree of Egbert is unworthy of credence.

Camden, in his first edition, had fixed the date of the change of the name as occurring in the year 810: in his second edition, he corrected it to 800. Holinshed says, *about* 800. Speed gives a much later date, — 819. It is evident that these disagreeing dates are all hazarded conjectures.

dom: it knitted the members into one common body, under one name, abolishing by legislative measures the very memory of Britain from the land. Although, therefore, no positive evidence has been produced, the state policy carries an internal evidence which yields some sanction to the obscure tradition.

It is a nicer difficulty to account for the choice of the Anglian name. It might have been preferred to distinguish the Saxons of Britain from the Saxons of the Continent; or the name was adopted, being that of the far more numerous race among these people. Four kingdoms of the octarchy were possessed by the Angles. Thus doubtful and obscure remains the real origin of our national name, which hitherto has hinged on a suspicious fact.

The casual occurrence of the ENGLES leaving their name to this land has bestowed on our country a foreign designation; and, — for the contingency was nearly occurring, — had the kingdom of Northumbria preserved its ascendency in the octarchy, the seat of dominion had been altered. In that case, the Lowlands of Scotland would have formed a portion of England; York would have stood forth as the metropolis of Britain; and London had been but a remote mart for her port and her commerce. Another idiom, perhaps, too, other manners, had changed the whole face of the country. We had been Northmen, not Southerns: our neighborhood had not proved so troublesome to France. But the kingdom of Wessex prevailed, and became the sole monarchy of England. Such local contingencies have decided the character of a whole people.*

The history of LOCAL NAMES is one of the most capricious and fortuitous in the history of man. The etymologist must not be implicitly trusted; for it is necessary to be

* Mitford's "Harmony of Language," 429. I might have placed this possible circumstance in the article, "A History of Events which have not happened," in "Curiosities of Literature."

acquainted with the history of a people, as much as the history of languages, to be certain of local derivations. We have recently been cautioned, by a sojourner in the most ancient of kingdoms,* not too confidently to rely on etymology, or to assign too positively any reason for the origin of LOCAL NAMES. No etymologist could have accounted for the name of our nation, had he not had recourse to our annals. Sir WALTER RALEIGH, from his observations in the New World, has confirmed this observation by circumstances which probably remain unknown to the present inhabitants. The actual names given to those places in America which they still retain are nothing more than the blunders of the first Europeans, demanding by signs and catching at words by which neither party were intelligible to one another.†

* Sir GARDNER WILKINSON, in the curious volume of his recondite discoveries in the land of the Pyramids.

† "History of the World," 167, fol. 1666. We have also a curious account of the ancient manner of naming persons and places among our own nation in venerable Lambarde's "Perambulations of Kent," 349, 453.

THE ANGLO-SAXONS.

THE history and literature of England are involved in the transactions of a people, who, living in such remote times at the highest of their fortunes, never advanced beyond a semi-civilization. But political freedom was the hardy and jealous offspring nursed in the forests of Germany. There was first heard the proclamation of equal laws; and there a people first assumed the name of Franks, or Freemen. Our language and our laws and our customs originate with our Teutonic ancestors: among them we are to look for the trunk, if not the branches, of our national establishments. In the rude antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church, our theoretical inquirers in ecclesiastical history trace purer doctrines and a more primitive discipline; and in the shadowy Witenagemot, the movable elements of the British Constitution. The language and literature of England still lie under their influence; for this people everywhere left the impression of a strong hand.

The history of the Anglo-Saxons as a people is without a parallel in the annals of a nation. Their story during five centuries of dominion in this land may be said to have been unknown to generations of Englishmen. The monuments of their history, the veritable records of their customs and manners, their polity, their laws, their institutions, their literature, whatever reveals the genius of a people, lie entombed in their own contemporary manuscripts, and in another source which we long neglected, — in those ancient volumes of their Northern brothers, who had not been idle observers of the transactions of England, which seems often to have been to them

"the land of promise." The Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, those authentic testimonies of the existence of the nation, were long dispersed, neglected, even unintelligible, disfigured by strange characters, and obscured by perplexing forms of diction. The language as well as the writing had passed away; all had fallen into desuetude; and no one suspected that the history of a whole people so utterly cast into forgetfulness could ever be written.

But the lost language and the forgotten characters antiquity and religion seemed to have consecrated in the eyes of the learned Archbishop MATTHEW PARKER, who was the first to attempt their restitution by an innocent stratagem. To his edition of Thomas Walsingham's History in 1574, his Grace added the Life of Alfred by this king's secretary, Asser, *printed in the Saxon character;* we are told, as "an invitation to English readers to draw them in unawares to an acquaintance with the *handwriting of their ancestors*."* "The invitation" was somewhat awful; and whether the guests were delighted or dismayed, let some Saxonist tell. SPELMAN, the great legal archæologist, was among the earliest who ventured to search amid the Anglo-Saxon duskiness, at a time when he knew not one who could even interpret the writing. This great lawyer had been perplexed by many barbarous names and terms which had become obsolete: they were Saxon. He was driven to the study; and his "Glossary" is too humble a title for that treasure of law and antiquity, of history and of disquisition, which astonished the learned world at home and abroad, while the unsold copies during the life of the author checked the continuation; so few was the number of students, and few they must still be. Yet the devotion of its votary was not the less; for he had prepared the foundation of a Saxon professorship. Spelman was the father: but he who enlarged the inheritance of these

* Bp. Nicholson's Eng. Lib.

Anglo-Saxon studies appeared in the learned SOMNER; and, though he lived through distracted times which loved not antiquity, the cell of the antiquary was hallowed by the restituted lore. HICKES, in his elaborate "Thesaurus," displayed a literature which had never been read, and which he himself had not yet learned to read. These were giants: their successors were dwarfs, who could not add to their stores, and little heeded their possessions. Few rarely succeeded in reading the Saxon; and, at that day (about the year 1700), no printer could cast the types, which were deemed barbarous, or, as the antiquary Rowe Mores expresses it, "unsightly to politer eyes." A lady, — and she is not the only one who has found pleasure in studying this ancient language of our country, — Mrs. ELSTOB, the niece of Hickes, patronized by a celebrated Duchess of Portland, furnished several versions; but the Saxon Homilies she had begun to print, for some unknown cause, were suspended: the unpublished but printed sheets are preserved at our National Library. These pursuits, having long languished, seemed wholly to disappear from our literature.

None of our historians, from MILTON to HUME, ever referred to an original Saxon authority. They took their representations from the writings of the monks; but the true history of the Anglo-Saxons was not written in Latin. It was not from monkish scribes, who recorded public events in which the Saxons had no influence, that the domestic history of a race dispossessed of all power could be drawn; and far less would they record the polity which had once constituted their lost independence. The annalist of the monastery, flourishing under another dynasty, placed in other times and amid other manners, was estranged from any community of feeling with a people who were then sunk into the helots of England. MILTON, in his "History of Britain," imagined that the transactions of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy, or Octarchy, would be as worthless "to chronicle as the wars of kites or crows

flocking and fighting in the air." Thus a poet-historian can veil, by a brilliant metaphor, the want of that knowledge which he contemns before he has acquired. This was less pardonable in a philosopher; and when HUME observed, perhaps with the eyes of Milton, that "he would hasten through the obscure and uninteresting period of Saxon annals," however cheering to his reader was the calmness of his indolence, the philosopher, in truth, was wholly unconscious that these "obscure and uninteresting annals of the Anglo-Saxons" formed of themselves a complete history, offering new results for his profound and luminous speculations on the political state of man. Genius is often obsequious to its predecessors, and we track BURKE in the path of Hume; and, so late as in 1794, we find our elegant antiquary, Bishop PERCY, lamenting the scanty and defective annals of the Anglo-Saxons, — naked epitomes, bare of the slightest indications of the people themselves. The history of the dwellers in our land had hitherto yielded no traces of the customs and domestic economy of the nation: all, beyond some public events, was left in darkness and conjecture.

We find ELLIS and RITSON still erring in the trackless paths. All this national antiquity was wholly unsuspected by these zealous investigators. In this uncertain condition stood the history of the Anglo-Saxons, when a new light rose in the hemisphere, and revealed to the English public a whole antiquity of so many centuries. In 1805, for the first time, the story and the literature of the Anglo-Saxons was given to the country. It was our studious explorer, SHARON TURNER, who first opened these untried ways in our national antiquities.*

Anglo-Saxon studies have been recently renovated; but unexpected difficulties have started up. A language whose

* It is pleasing to record a noble instance of the enthusiasm of learned research. "The leisure hours of sixteen years" furnished a comprehensive history of which "two-thirds had not yet appeared." — *Mr. Turner's Preface.*

syntax has not been regulated, whose dialects can never be discriminated, and whose orthography and orthoepy seem irrecoverable, yields faithless texts when confronted; and treacherous must be the version if the construction be too literal or too loose, or, what happens sometimes, ambiguous. Different Anglicizers offer more than one construction.*

It is now ascertained that the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts are found in a most corrupt state.† This fatality was occasioned by the inattention or the unskilfulness of the calligrapher, whose task must have required a learned pen. The Anglo-Saxon verse was regulated by a puerile system of alliteration,‡ and the rhythm depended on accentuation. Whenever the strokes, or dots, marking the accent or the pauses, are omitted or misplaced, whole sentences are thrown into confusion, compound words are disjoined, and separate words are jumbled together. "Nouns have been mistaken for verbs, and particles for nouns."

These difficulties, arising from unskilful copyists, are infinitely increased by the genius of the Anglo-Saxon poets themselves. The tortuous inversion of their composition often leaves an ambiguous sense. Their perpetual periph-

* A sufferer, moreover, fully assures us that some remain, which "must baffle all conjecture;" and another critic has judicially decreed, that, in every translation from the Anglo-Saxon that has fallen under his notice, "there are blunders enough to satisfy the most unfriendly critic." "The Song of the Traveller," in "the Exeter Book," was translated by Conybeare; a more accurate transcript was given by Mr. Kemble in his edition of Beowulf; and now Mr. Guest has furnished a third, varying from both. We cannot be certain that a fourth may not correct the three.

† "Without exception!" is the energetic cry of the translator of Beowulf.

‡ The first line contains two words commencing with the same letter, and the second line has its first word also beginning with that letter. This difficulty seems insurmountable to a modern reader: for our authority confesses that "in the Saxon poetry, as it is preserved in manuscripts, the first line often contains but one alliterating word; and, from the negligence of the scribes, the alliteration is, in many instances, entirely lost." — *Dissertation on Anglo-Saxon Poetry, Frazer's Magazine*, xii. 81

rasis, their abrupt transitions, their pompous inflations and their elliptical style, and not less their portentous metaphorical nomenclature, where a single object must be recognized by twenty denominations, not always appropriate, and too often clouded by the most remote and dark analogies,* — all these have perplexed the most skilful judges, who have not only misinterpreted passages, but have even failed to comprehend the very subject of their original. This last circumstance has been remarkably shown in the fate of the heroic tale of BEOWULF. When it first fell to the hard lot of WANLEY, the librarian of the Earl of Oxford, to describe

* A striking instance how long a universal error can last, arising from one of these obscure conceits, is noticed by Mr. GRENVILLE PIGOTT in his "Manual of Scandinavian Mythology."

These warlike barbarians were long reproached, that even their religion fomented an implacable hatred of their enemies; for, in the future state of their paradisiacal Valhalla, their deceased heroes rejoiced at their celestial compotations, — *to drink out of the skulls of their enemies.*

A passage in the death-song of Regner Lodbrog, literally translated, is, "Soon shall we *drink* out of the *curved trees of the head;*" which Bishop Percy translates, "Soon, in the splendid hall of Odin, we shall drink beer out of the skulls of our enemies." And thus also have the Danes themselves, the Germans, and the French.

The original and extraordinary blunder lies with Olaus Wormius, the great Danish antiquary, to whose authority poets and historians bowed without looking further. Our grave Olaus was bewildered by this monstrous style of the scalds, and translated this drinking-bout at Valhalla according to his own fancy, — "Ex concavis crateribus craniorum;" thus turning the "trees of the head" into a "skull," and the skull into a hollow cup. The scald, however, was innocent of this barbarous invention, and, in his violent figures and disordered fancy, merely alluded to the branching horns, growing as trees, from the heads of animals; that is, the curved horns which formed their drinking-cups. If Olaus here, like Homer, nodded, something might be urged for his defence; for who is bound to understand such remote if not absurd conceits? But I do not know that w could plead as fairly for his own interpolating fancy of "drinking out of the skulls of their enemies."

This grave blunder became universal, and a century passed away without its being detected. It was so familiar, that Peter Pindar once said that the booksellers, like the heroes of Valhalla, drank their wine out of the skulls of authors.

"the Exploits of Beowulf," he imagined or conjectured that it contained "the wars which this Dane waged against the reguli or petty kings of Sweden." He probably decided on the subject by confining his view to the opening page, where a hero descends from his ship, but for a very different purpose from a military expedition. Fortunately, Wanley lauded the manuscript as a *tractatus nobilissimus* and an *egregium exemplum* of the Anglo-Saxon poetry. Probably this manuscript remained unopened during a century, when SHARON TURNER detected the error of Wanley; but he himself misconceived the design of these romantic "Exploits." Yet this diligent historian carefully read and analyzed this heroic tale. CONYBEARE, who had fallen into the same erroneous conception, at length caught up a clew in this labyrinth; and finally even a safer issue has been found, though possibly not without some desperate efforts, by the version of Mr. KEMBLE.

Even the learned in Saxon have not always been able to distinguish this verse from prose; the verse unmarked by rhyme being written continuously as prose.* A diction turgid and obscure was apparent; but in what consisted the art of the poet, or the metrical system, long baffled the most ingenious conjectures. RITSON, in his perplexity, described this poetry or metre as a "rhymeless sort of poetry, a kind of bombast or insane prose, from which it is very difficult to be distinguished." TYRWHIT and ELLIS remained wholly at a loss to comprehend the fabric of Anglo-Saxon poesy. HICKES, in the fascination of scholarship, had decided that it proceeded on a metrical system of syllabic quantities, and surmounted all difficulties by submitting the rhythmical cadences of Gothic poesy to the prosody of classical antiquity. This was a literary hallucination, and a remarkable evidence

* HICKES and WANLEY mistook the "Ormulum," a paraphrase of gospel history, as mere prose; when, in fact, it is composed in long lines of fifteen syllables, without rhyme.

of a favorite position maintained merely by the force of prepossession.

To what cause are we to ascribe the complex construction of the diction, and the multiplied intricacies of the metres, of the poetry of the Northmen? Bishop Percy noticed, that the historian of the Runic poetry has counted up among the ancient Icelandic poets one hundred and thirty-six different metres. The Icelandic and the Anglo-Saxon are cognate languages, being both dialects of the ancient Gothic or Teutonic. The genius of the Danish scalds often displays in their Eddas* a sublime creative power far out of the reach of the creeping and narrow faculty of the Saxon: yet the same mechanism regulated both; the fixed recurrence of certain letters or syllables which constitutes that perpetual alliteration, which oftener than rhyme gratified the ear of barbaric poesy, and a metaphorical phraseology or poetical vocabulary appropriated by the bards, furnishing the adept with phrases when he had not always ready any novel conceptions. Shall we deem such arbitrary forms and such artificial contrivances, the mere childishness of tastes, to have been invented in the wintry years of these climates, to amuse themselves in their stern solitudes? or, rather, may we not consider them as a mystery of the craft, the initiation of the order? — for, by this scholarlike discipline in multiplying difficulties, the later bards separated themselves from those humbler minstrels who were left to their own inartificial emotions.

Such prescribed formulæ, and such a mechanism of verse, must have tethered the imagination in a perpetual circle: it was art which violated the free course of nature. In this

* See "A Manual of Scandinavian Mythology," by Mr. Grenville Pigott. 1839. "The Northern Mythology" will be found here not only skilfully arranged, but its wondrous myths and fables elucidated by modern antiquaries. It is further illustrated by the translation of the poem of Œhlenschläger, on "the Gods of the North;" whose genius has been transfused in the nervous simplicity of the present version.

condition we often find even the poetry of the Scandinavians. The famous death-song of Regner Lodbrog seems little more than an iteration of the same ideas. An Anglo-Saxon poem has the appearance of a collection of short hints rather than poetical conceptions, curt and ejaculative: a paucity of objects yields but a paucity of emotions, too vague for detail, too abrupt for deep passion, too poor in fancy to scatter the imagery of poesy. The Anglo-Saxon betrays its confined and monotonous genius: we are in the first age of art, when pictures are but monochromes of a single color. Hence, in the whole map of Anglo-Saxon poetry, it is difficult to discriminate one writer from another.*

Their prose has taken a more natural character than their verse. The writings of Alfred are a model of the Anglo-Saxon style in its purest state. They have never been collected; but it is said they would form three octavo volumes. They consist chiefly of translations.

The recent versions in literal prose, by two erudite Saxonists of two of the most remarkable Anglo-Saxon poems, will enable an English reader to form a tolerable notion of the

* Such is the critical decision of CONYBEARE, a glorious enthusiast. — *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry, by* JOHN JOSIAH CONYBEARE. 1826.

The late Mr. Price, the editor of Warton's History, announced an elaborate work on the Anglo-Saxon poetry. The verse of CONYBEARE and the disquisitions of PRICE would have completed this cycle of our ancient poetry. But a fatal coincidence marked the destiny of these eminent votaries of our poetic antiquity; both prematurely ceasing to exist while occupied on their works. CONYBEARE has survived in his brother, whose congenial tastes collected his remains. PRICE, who had long resided abroad, and there had silently stored up the whole wealth of Northern literature, on his return home remained little known till his valued edition of Warton announced to the literary world the acquisitions they were about to receive. He has left a name behind him, but not a work; for Price had no fraternal friend.

Since this chapter was written, Mr. Thomas Wright has published "An Essay on the State of Literature and Learning under the Anglo-Saxons." It displays a comprehensive view taken by one to whose zealous labors the lovers of our ancient literature are so deeply indebted.

genius of this literature. CONYBEARE'S poetical versions remained unrivalled. But if a literal version of a primitive poetry soon ceases to be poetry, so likewise, if the rude outlines are to be retouched and a brilliant coloring is to be borrowed, we are receiving Anglo-Saxon poetry in the cadences of Milton and "the orient hues" of Gray.

CÆDMON AND MILTON.

Cædmon the Saxonists hail as "the Father of English Song."

The personal history of this bard is given in the taste of the age. Cædmon was a herdsman, who had never read a single poem. Sitting in his "beership," whenever the circling harp, that "Wood of Joy," as the Saxon glee-men have called it, was offered to his hand, all unskilled, the peasant, stung with shame, would hurry homewards. Already past the middle of life, never had the peasant dreamt that he was a sublime poet, or at least a poet composing on sublime themes, incapable as he was even of reading his own Saxon.

As once he lay slumbering in a stall, the apparition of a strange man thus familiarly greeted him: "Cædmon, sing some song to me!" The cowherd modestly urged that he was mute and unmusical. "Nevertheless, thou shalt sing!" retorted the benignant apparition. "What shall I sing?" rejoined the minstrel, who had never sung. "Sing the origin of things!" The peasant, amazed, found his tongue loosened, and listened to his own voice, — a voice which was to reach posterity.

He flew in the morning to the town-reeve to announce a wonder, — that he had become a poet in the course of a single night. He recited the poem; which, however (for we possess it), only proves, that, between sleeping and waking, eighteen lines of dreamy periphrasis may express a single idea. Venerable Bede held this effusion as a pure inspiration: the

modern historian of the Anglo-Saxons indulgently discovers three ideas: Conybeare, more critical, acknowledges that "the eighteen lines expand the mere proposition of 'Let us praise God, the maker of heaven and earth.'" But this was only the first attempt of a great enterprise: it was a thing to be magnified for the neighboring monastery of Whitby, who gladly received such a new brother.

For a poet who had never written a verse, it was only necessary to open his vein: a poet who could not read, only required to be read to. The whole monkery came down with the canonical books. They informed him of all things, from "Genesis" down to "the doctrine of the apostles." "The good man listened," as saith Venerable Bede, "like a clean animal ruminating; and his song and his verse were so winsome to hear, that his teachers wrote them down, and learned from his mouth." These teachers could not have learned more than they themselves had taught. We can only draw out of a cistern the waters which we have poured into it. Every succeeding day, however, swelled the Cædmonian poem. Assuredly they wanted neither zeal nor hands for the glory of the monastery of Whitby.

Such is a literary anecdote of the seventh century conveyed to us by ancient Bede. The dream of the apparition's inspiration of this unlettered monk was one more miracle among many in honor of the monastery: and it was to be told in the customary way; for never yet in a holy brotherhood was found a recusant.

Even to this day, we ourselves dream grotesque adventures: but, in the days of monachism, visions were not merely a more vivid and lengthened dream, a slight delirium; for they usually announced something important. A dream was a prognostic or a prelude. The garrulous chroniclers, and saintly Bede himself, that primeval gossiper, afford abundant evidence of such secret revelations. Whenever some great act was designed, or some awful secret was to be divulged, a dream

announced it to the world. Was a king to be converted to Christianity, the people were enlightened by the vision which the sovereign revealed to them. Was a maiden to take the vow of virginity, or a monastery to be built, an angelical vision hovered, and sometimes specified the very spot. Was a crime of blood to be divulged by some penitent accessory, somebody had a dream; and the criminal has stood convicted by the grave-side, which gave up the fatal witness in his victim. In those ages of simplicity and pious frauds, a dream was an admirable expedient by which important events were carried on, and mystification satisfactorily explained the incomprehensible.

The marvellous incident on which the history of Cædmon revolves may only veil a fact which has nothing extraordinary in itself, when freed from the invention which disguises it. Legends like the present one were often borrowed by one monastery from another; and an exact counterpart of the dream and history of our Saxon bard, in a similar personage and a like result, has been pointed out as occurring in Gaul. A vernacular or popular version of the Scriptures being required, it was supplied by a *peasant wholly ignorant of the poetic art till he had been instructed in a* DREAM.*

* Sir Francis Palgrave's "Dissertation on Cædmon," in the Archæologia.

In another work, this erudite antiquary explains the marvellous part of Cædmon's history by "natural causes;" and such a principle of investigation is truly philosophical: but we must not look over imposture in the search for "natural causes." "Cædmon's inability to perform his task," observes our learned expositor, "appears to have arisen rather from the want of musical knowledge than from his dulness; and therefore it is quite possible, that, *allowing for some little exaggeration*, his poetical talents may have been *suddenly developed in the manner described.*" — *Hist. of England*, i. 162. Thus the Saxon Milton rose in one memorable night, after a whole life passed without the poet once surmising himself to be poetical; and thus (for we consent not to yield up a single point in the narrative of "the Dream") appeared the patronizing apparition and the exhilarating dialogue. A lingering lover of the mediæval genius can perceive nothing more in a *circumstantial legend* than "a little exaggeration." I seem to hear the shrill

Scriptural themes were common with the poets of the monastery.* The present enterprise, judging from the variety of its fragments from both Testaments and from the Apocrypha, in its complete state would have formed a chronological poem of the main incidents of the Scriptures in the vernacular Saxon. This was a burden of magnitude which no single shoulder could have steadily carried, and probably was supported by several besides "the Dreamer." Critical Saxonists, indeed, have detected a variation in the style, and great inequalities in the work. Such discordances indicate that the paraphrase was occasionally resumed by some successor; as idling monks, at a later period, were often the continuators of voluminous romances. I would class the Cædmonian poem among the many attempts of the monachal genius to familiarize the people with the miraculous and the religious narratives in the Scriptures by a paraphrase in the vernacular idiom. The poem may be deemed as equivocal as the poet. The text has been impeached: interpolations and omissions are acknowledged by the learned in Saxon lore. The poem is said to have been written in the seventh century; and the earliest

attenuated tones of Ritson, in his usual idiomatic diction, screaming, "It is a *lie* and an *imposture* of the stinking *monks!*"

The Viscount de Chateaubriand is infinitely more amusing than the plodders in the "weary ways of antiquity." The mystical tale of the Saxon monk is dashed into a glittering foam of enigmatical brevity. "*Cædmon rêvait en vers et composait des poèmes en dormant; Poésie est Songe.*" And thus dreams may be expounded by dreams! — *Essai sur la Littérature Anglaise*, i. 55.

* "The Six Days of the Creation" offered a subject for an heroic poem to Dracontius, a Spanish monk, in the fifth century, and who was censured for neglecting to honor the seventh by a description of the sabbath of the divine repose. It is preserved in "Bib. Patrum," vol. viii., and has been published with notes. Genesis and Exodus, the Fall of Adam, the Deluge, and the passage of the Red Sea, were themes which invited the sacred effusions of Avitus, the Archbishop of Vienne, who flourished in the sixth century. His writings were collected by Père Sirmond. This archbishop attacked the Arians; but we have only fragments of these polemical pamphlets: as these were highly orthodox, what is wanting occasioned regrets in a former day. Other histories in Latin verse, drawn from the Old Testament, are recorded

manuscript we possess is of the tenth, suffering in that course of time all the corruptions or variations of the scribes, while the ruder Northern dialect has been changed into the more polished Southern. If we may confide in a learned conjecture, it may happen that Cædmon is no name at all, but merely a word or a phrase; and thus the entity of the Dreamer of the Monastery of Whitby may vanish in the wind of two Chaldaic syllables!* Be this as it may, for us the poem is an entity, whatever becomes of the pretended Dreamer.

It has become an arduous inquiry, whether MILTON has not drawn largely from the obscurity of this monkish Ennius. "In reading Cædmon," says SHARON TURNER, "we are reminded of Milton, — of a 'Paradise Lost' in rude miniature." Conybeare advances, "The pride, rebellion, and punishments of Satan and his princes have a resemblance to Milton so remarkable, that *much of this portion might be almost literally translated by a cento of lines from the great poet.*"† A recent Saxonist, in noticing "the creation of Cædmon as beautiful," adds, "It is still more interesting from *its singular correspondence, even in expression, with 'Paradise Lost.'*"

The ancient as well as the modern of these scriptural poets has adopted a narrative which is not found in the Scriptures. The rebellion of Satan before the creation of man, and

* Among our ancestors, all proper names were significant; and, when they are not, we have the strongest presumptive reasons for suspecting that the name has been borrowed from some other tongue. The piety of many monks, in their pilgrimages in the Holy Land, would induce them to acquire some knowledge of the Hebrew, or even the Chaldee. Bede read Hebrew. A scholar, who has justly observed this, somewhat cabalistically has discovered that "the initial word of Genesis in Chaldee," and printed in Hebraic characters בהרמין, exhibits the presumed name of the Saxon monk.

† This sort of cento seems to have been a favorite fancy with this masterly versifier; for, of another Anglo-Saxon bard who composed on warlike subjects, this critic says, "If the names of Patroclus and Menelaus were substituted for Byrthnoth and Godric, some of the scenes might be almost literally translated into a cento of lines from Homer." Homer's claim to originality, however, is secure from any critical collation with the old Saxon monk.

his precipitation with the apostate angels into a dungeon-gulf of flame and ice and darkness, though an incident familiar to us as a gospel-text, remains nothing more than a legend, unhallowed by sacred writ.

Where are we, then, to seek for the origin of a notion universal throughout Christendom? I long imagined that this revolt in heaven had been one of the traditions hammered in the old rabbinical forge; and, in the Talmudical lore, there are tales of the fallen angels: but I am assured by a learned professor in these studies, that the Talmud contains no narrative of "the rebellion of Satan." The Hebrews, in their sojourn in Babylon, had imbibed many Chaldean fables, and some fanciful inventions. At this obscure period, did this singular episode in sacred history steal into their popular creed? Did it issue from that awful cradle of monstrous imaginings, of demons, of spirits, and of terrifying deities, — Persia and India? In the Brahminical shasters, we find a rebellion of the angels before the creation, and their precipitation from light into darkness: their restoration by the clemency of the Creator, however, occurs after their probationary state, during millions of years in their metamorphoses on earth; but this seems only the veil of an allegory designed to explain their dark doctrine of the metempsychosis. The rebellion of the angels, as we have been taught it, is associated with their everlasting chains and eternal fire. How the legend became universally received, may baffle inquiry.*

* Notwithstanding the information with which I was favored, I cannot divest myself of the notion, that "the rebellion of the angels" must be more explicitly described among the Jewish traditions than yet appears, because we find allusions to it in two of the apostolical writings. In the Epistle of Jude, ver. 6: "*The angels which kept not their first estate*, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." And in Pet. ii. 4: "*God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell*, and delivered them unto chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." These texts have admitted of some dispute; but it seems, however, probable that the apostles, just released from their Jewish bondage, had not emancipated themselves from the received Hebraical doctrines.

But the coincidence of the Cædmonian with the Miltonian poem, in having adopted the same peculiar subject of the revolt of Satan and the expulsion of the angels, is not the most remarkable one in the two works. The same awful narrative is pursued, and we are startled at the opening of the Pandemonium by discovering the same scene and the same actors. When we scrutinize into minuter parts, we are occasionally struck by some extraordinary similarities.

Cædmon, to convey a notion of the ejection from heaven to hell, tells that "the Fiend, with all his comrades, fell from heaven above through as long as *three nights and days*." Milton awfully describes Satan, "confounded, though immortal," rolling in the fiery gulf:—

> "*Nine times the space that measures day and night*
> To mortal men."

Cædmon describes the Deity having cast the evil angel into that "house of perdition, down on that new bed; after, gave him a *name* that the highest (of the devils which they had now become) should be called *Satan* thenceforwards." Milton has preserved the same notice of the origin of *the name*, thus:—

> "To whom the *Arch-Enemy*,
> And thence in heaven called *Satan*;"—

Satan in Hebrew signifying "the Enemy," or "the Adversary."

The harangue of Satan to his legions, by the Saxon monk, cannot fail to remind us of the first grand scene in the "Paradise Lost," however these creations of the two poets be distinct. "The swart hell—a land void of light, and full of flame"—is like Milton's:—

> "Yet from these flames
> No light, but rather darkness visible."

The locality is not unlike: "There they have at even, immeasurably long, each of all the fiends, a renewal of fire, with

sulphur charged; but cometh ere dawn the eastern wind frost, bitter cold, ever fire or dart." This torment we find in the hell of Milton:—

> "The bitter change
> Of fierce extremes, extremes by change more fierce,
> From beds of raging *fire* to starve in *ice*."
>
> "The parching air
> *Burns frore*, and *cold performs the effect of fire*." *

The "Inferno" of Dante has also "its eternal darkness for the dwellers in fierce *heat* and in *ice*." † It is evident that the Saxon, the Italian, and the Briton had drawn from the same source. The Satan of Cædmon, in "the torture-house," is represented as in "the dungeon of perdition." He lies in chains, his feet bound, his hands manacled, his neck fastened by iron bonds. Satan and his crew the monk has degraded into Saxon convicts. Milton, indeed, has his—

> "Adamantine chains and penal fire;"—

and—

> "A dungeon horrible on all sides round."

But, as Satan was to be the great actor, Milton was soon compelled to find some excuse for freeing the Evil Spirit from the chains which heaven had forged; and this he does:—

> "Chained on the burning lake, *nor ever thence*
> *Had risen, or heaved his head, but that the will*
> *And high permission of all-ruling Heaven*
> *Left him at large to his own dark designs*,
> That with reiterated crimes he might
> Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
> Evil to others."

The Saxon monk had not the dexterity to elude the difficult position in which the Arch-Fiend was for ever fixed: he was indissolubly chained, and yet much was required to be done. It is not, therefore, Satan himself who goes on the

* Paradise Lost, ii. 594. † Inferno, canto iii. 5.

subdolous design of wreaking his revenge on the innocent pair in paradise. For this he despatches one of his associates, who is thus described: "Prompt in arms, he had a crafty soul; this chief set his helmet on his head; he many speeches knew of guileful words: wheeled up from thence, he *departed through the doors of hell.*" We are reminded of—

> "The infernal doors, that on their hinges grate
> Harsh thunder."

The emissary of Satan, in Cædmon, had "a strong mind, lion-like in air; *in hostile mood he dashed the fire aside with a fiend's power.*" * That demon flings aside the flames of hell with the bravery of his sovereign, as we see in Milton:—

> "Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
> His mighty stature: *on each hand, the flames,*
> *Driven backward, slope their pointing spires, and, rolled*
> *In billows*, leave in the midst a horrid vale." †

Cædmon thus represents Satan: "Then spoke the haughty king, who of angels erst was *brightest, fairest in heaven*, beloved of his master: *so beauteous was his form*, he was like to the light stars."

Milton's conception of the form of Satan is the same:—

> "His form had not yet lost
> All her *original brightness*, nor appeared
> Less than archangel ruined." ‡

And—

> "His countenance as the *morning-star*, that guides
> The starry flock, allured them." §

Literary curiosity may be justly excited to account for these apparent resemblances, and to learn whether similarity and coincidence necessarily prove identity and imitation; and whether, finally, Cædmon was ever known to Milton.

The Cædmonian manuscript is as peculiar in its history as

* Cædmon, p. 29.
† Paradise Lost, i. 221.
‡ Paradise Lost, i. 592
§ Paradise Lost, v. 798.

its subject. This poem, which we are told fixed the attention of our ancestors "from the sixth to the twelfth century," and the genius of whose writer was "stamped deeply and lastingly upon the literature of our country," * had wholly disappeared from any visible existence. It was accidently discovered only in a single manuscript, — the gift of Archbishop Usher to the learned FRANCIS JUNIUS. During thirty years of this eminent scholar's residence in England, including his occasional visits to Holland and Friesland to recover by the study of the Friesic living dialect the extinct Anglo-Saxon, he devoted his protracted life to the investigation of the origin of the Gothic dialects. A Saxon poem, considerable for its size and for its theme, in a genuine manuscript, was for our Northern student a most precious acquisition; and, that this solitary manuscript should not be liable to accidents, Junius printed the original at Amsterdam in 1655, unaccompanied by any translation or by any notes.

We must now have recourse to a few dates.

Milton had fallen blind in 1654. The poet began "Paradise Lost" about 1658. The composition occupied three years; but the publication was delayed till 1667.

If Milton had any knowledge of Cædmon, it could only have been in the solitary and treasured manuscript of Junius. To have granted even the loan of the only original the world possessed, we may surmise that Junius would not have slept through all the nights of its absence; and, if the Saxon manuscript was ever in the hands of Milton, could our poet have read it?

We have every reason to believe that Milton did not read Saxon. At that day, who did? There were not "ten men to save the city." In Milton's "History of England," a loose and solitary reference to the Saxon Chronicle, then untranslated, was probably found ready at hand; for all his Saxon

* Guest's "History of English Rhythms," ii. 23.

annals are drawn from the Latin monkish authorities: and, in that wonderful list of one hundred dramatic subjects which the poet had set down for the future themes of his Muse, there are many on Saxon stories; but all the references are to Speed and Holinshed. The nephew of the poet has enumerated all the languages in which Milton was conversant: "the Hebrew, (and, I think, the Syriac), the Greek, the Latin, the Italian, the Spanish, and French." We find no allusion to any of the Northern tongues, which that votary of classical antiquity and of Ausonian melody and fancy would deem (can we doubt it?) dissonant and barbarous. The Northern scalds were yet as little known as our own Saxons. A recent discovery, that Milton once was desirous of reading Dutch, may possibly be alleged by the Saxonists as an approach to the study of the Saxon; but, at that time, Milton was in office as "the Secretary for Foreign Tongues," and in a busy intercourse with the Hollanders.*

"Secretary Milton," at that moment, was probably anxious to con the phrases of a Dutch state-paper, to scrutinize into the temper of their style. Had Milton ever acquired the

* This curious literary information has been disclosed by ROGER WILLIAMS, the founder of the State of Rhode Island, who was despatched to England in 1651 to obtain the repeal of a charter granted to Mr. Coddington. I give this remarkable passage in the words of this Anglo-American: "It pleased the Lord to call me for some time and with some persons to practise the Hebrew, the Greek, Latin, French, and Dutch. *The Secretary of the Council, Mr. Milton, for my Dutch I read him, read me many more languages.* Grammar-rules begin to be esteemed a tyranny. I taught two young gentlemen, a parliament-man's sons, as we teach our children English, — by words, phrases, and constant talk, &c." This vague "&c." stands so in the original, and leaves his "wondrous tale half-told." — *Memoirs of Roger Williams, the Founder of the State of Rhode Island, by James D. Knowles, Professor of Pastoral Duties in the Newton Theological Institution* 1834, p. 264.

I am indebted for this curious notice to the prompt kindness of my most excellent friend ROBERT SOUTHEY, — a name long dear to the public, as it will be to posterity; an author, the accuracy of whose knowledge does not yield to its extent.

Dutch idiom for literary purposes, to study Vondel, the Batavian Shakspeare,* from whom some foreigners imagine our poet might have drawn his "Lucifer," it could not have escaped the nephew in the enumeration of his uncle's philological acquirements. But even to read Dutch was not to read a Saxon manuscript, whose strange characters, uncouth abbreviations, and difficult constructions, are only mastered by long practice. To have known any thing about the solitary Cædmon, the poet must have been wholly indebted to the friendly offices of its guardian, — a personal intimacy which does not appear. The improbability that this scholar translated the manuscript phrase by phrase is nearly as great as the supposition, that the poet could have retained ideas and expressions to be reproduced in that epic poem which was not commenced till several years after.

The personal habits of Junius were somewhat peculiar. To his last days, he was unrelentingly busied in pursuits of philology, of which he has left to the Bodleian such monuments of his gigantic industry. Junius was such a rigid

* Mr. SOUTHEY observes, in a letter now before me, that "VONDEL'S 'Lucifer' was published in 1654; his 'Samson,' the same subject as the Agonistes,' 1661; his 'Adam,' 1664. CÆDMON, ANDREINI, and VONDEL, each or all, may have led Milton to consider the subject of his 'Paradise Lost;' but Vondel is the one who is most likely to have impressed him. Neither the Dutch nor the language were regarded with disrespect in those days. Vondel was the greatest writer of that language, and the 'Lucifer' is esteemed the best of his tragedies. Milton alone excepted, he was probably the greatest poet then living."

This critical note furnishes curious dates. Milton was blind when the 'Lucifer' was published; and there is so much of the personal feelings and condition of the poet himself in his "Samson Agonistes," that it is probable little or no resemblance could be traced in the Hollander. The "Adam" of Milton, and the whole "Paradise" itself, was completed in 1661. As for Cædmon, I submit the present chapter to Mr. Southey's decision.

No great genius appears to have made such free and wise use of his reading as Milton has done, and which has led, in several instances, to an accusation of what some might term plagiarism. We are not certain that Milton, when not yet blind, may not have read some of those obscure modern Latin poets whom Lauder scented out.

economist of time, that every hour was allotted to its separate work: each day was the repetition of the former; and, on a system, he avoided all visitors. Such a man could not have submitted to the reckless loss of many a golden day in hammering at the obscure sense of the Saxon monk, which the critics find by his own printed text he could not always master; nor is it more likely that Milton himself could have sustained his poetic excitement through the tedious progress of a verbal or cursory paraphrase of Scripture history by this Gothic bard. At that day, even Junius could not have discovered those "elastic rhythms" which solicit the ear of a more modern Saxon scholar in his studies of Cædmon,* but which we entirely owe to the skill and punctuation and accentuation of the recent editor, Mr. Thorpe.

Be it also observed, that Milton published his "Paradise Lost" in the lifetime of Junius, the only judge who could have convicted the bard who had daringly proposed —

> "To pursue
> Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme," —

of concealing what he had silently appropriated.

There are so many probabilities against the single possibility of Milton having had any knowledge of Cædmon, that we must decide by the numerical force of our own suggestions.

The startling similarities which have led away critical judgments, if calmly scrutinized, may be found to be those apparent resemblances or coincidences which poets drawing from the same source would fall into. There is a French mystery of "the Conception," where the scene is hell: Lucifer appeals to its inmates in a long address. This Satan of "the Conception" strikingly reminds us of the Prince of Darkness of Milton, and indeed has many creative touches;

* Guest's "History of English Rhythms."

and, had it been written after the work of Milton, it might have seemed a parody.*

Similarity and coincidence do not necessarily prove identity and imitation. Nor is the singular theme of "the Rebellion of the Angels" peculiar to either poet, since those who never heard of the Saxon monk have constructed whole poems and dramas on the celestial revolt.†

We may be little interested to learn, among all the dubious inquiries of "the origin of 'Paradise Lost,'" whether a vast poem, the most elaborate in its parts, and the most perfect in its completion, — a work, in the words of the great artist, —

> "Who knows how long
> Before had been contriving?" — P. L., ix. 138, —

was or could be derived from any obscure source. The interval between excellence and mediocrity removes all connection: it is that between incurable impotence and genial creation. A great poet can never be essentially indebted even to his prototype.

If we may still be interested in watching the primitive vigor of the self-taught, compared with the intellectual ideal of the poetical character, we must not allow ourselves, as might be shown in one of the critics of the Saxon school, to mistake Nature in her first poverty, bare, meagre, squalid, for the moulded nudity of the Graces. The nature of Ennius was no more the nature of Virgil than the nature of Cædmon was that of Milton; for what is obvious and familiar is the reverse of the beautiful and the sublime. We have seen the ideal being, —

* This speech, in which Satan appeals to and characterizes his infernals, may be read in Parfait's analysis of the Mystery. — *Hist. du Théâtre François*, i. 79.

† *L'Angeleida* of VALVASONE, the *Adamo* of ANDREINI, and others. — HAYLEY'S *Conjectures on the Origin of Paradise Lost.* — See also Tiraboschi and Ginguéné.

"Whose stature reached the sky, and on his crest
Sat Horror plumed," —

by the Saxon monk sunk down to a Saxon convict, "fastened by the neck, his hands manacled, and his feet bound."

Cædmon represents Eve, after having plucked the fruit, hastening to Adam with the apples: —

"Some in her hands she bare,
Some in her bosom lay,
Of the unblest fruit."

However natural or downright may be this specification, it is what could not have occurred with "the bosom" of our naked mother of mankind; and the artistical conception eluded the difficulty of carrying these apples: —

"From the tree returning, in her hand
A bough of fairest fruit." — ix. 850.

In Cædmon, it costs Eve a long day to persuade the sturdy Adam, an honest Saxon, to "the dark deed;" and her prudential argument, that "it were best to obey the pretended messenger of the Lord than risk his aversion," however natural, is very crafty for so young a sinner. In Milton we find the ideal; and, before Eve speaks, one may be certain of Adam's fall; for —

"In her face excuse
Came prologue, and apology too prompt,
Which, with bland words at will, she thus addressed."

A description too metaphysical for the meagre invention of the old Saxon monk.

We dare not place "the Milton of our forefathers" by the side of the only Milton whom the world will recognize. We would not compare our Saxon poetry to Saxon art, for that was too deplorable; but to place Cædmon in a parallel with Milton, which Plutarch might have done (for he was not very nice in his resemblances), we might as well compare the formless forms and the puerile inventions of the rude Saxon

artist, profusely exhibited in the drawings of the original manuscript of Cædmon,* with the noble conceptions and the immortal designs of the Sistine Chapel.

* These singular attempts at art may be inspected in above fifty plates, in the Archæologia, vol. xx. We may rejoice at their preservation; for Art, even in the attempts of its children, may excite ideas which might not else have occurred to us.

BEOWULF: THE HERO-LIFE.

THE Anglo-Saxon poetical narrative of "the Exploits of Beowulf" forms a striking contrast with the chronological paraphrase of Cædmon. Its genuine antiquity unquestionably renders it a singular curiosity; but it derives an additional interest from its representation of the primitive simplicity of a Homeric period, — the infancy of customs and manners and emotions of that hero-life, which the Homeric poems first painted for mankind; that hero-life of which Macpherson in his "Ossian" caught but imperfect conceptions from the fragments he may have collected, while he metamorphosed his ideal Celtic heroes into those of the sentimental romance of another age and another race.

The Northern hordes under their petty chieftains, cast into a parallel position with those princes of Greece whose realms were provinces and whose people were tribes, often resembled them in the like circumstances, the like characters, and the like manners. Such were those kinglings who could possess themselves of a territory in a single incursion, and whose younger brothers, stealing out of their lone bays, extended their dominion as "sea-kings" on the illimitable ocean.* The war-ship and the mead-hall bring us back to that early era of society, when great men knew only to be heroes, flattered by their bards, whose songs are ever the echoes of their age and their patrons.

* See the curious delineation of the Vikings of the North, in Turner's "Hist. of the Anglo-Saxons," i. 456, third edition.

We discover these heroes, Danes or Angles, as we find them in the Homeric period, audacious with the self-confidence of their bodily prowess; vaunting, and talkative of their sires and of themselves; the son ever known by denoting the father, and the father by his marriage alliance, — that primitive mode of recognition, at a period when, amid the perpetual conflicts of rival chieftains, scarcely any but relations could be friends. The family bond was a sure claim to protection. Like the Homeric heroes, they were as unrelenting in their hatreds as indissoluble in their partisanship; suspicious of the stranger, but welcoming the guest. We find them rapacious, for plunder was their treasure; and prodigal in their distributions of their golden armlets and weighed silver, for their egotism was as boundless as their violence. Yet pride and glory fermented the coarse leaven of these mighty marauders, who were even chivalric ere chivalry rose into an order. The religion of these ages was wild as their morality. Few heroes but bore some relationship to Woden; and, even in their rude paganized Christianity, some mythological name cast its lustre in their genealogies. In the uncritical chronicles of the middle ages, it is not always evident whether the mortal was not a divinity. Their mythic legends have thrown confusion into their national annals, often accepted by historians as authentic records.* But, if antiquaries still wander among shadows, the poet cannot err. BEOWULF may be a

* Mr. KEMBLE, the translator of BEOWULF, has extricated himself out of an extraordinary dilemma. The first volume, which exhibits the Anglo-Saxon text, furnished in the preface, with an elaborate abundance, all the historical elucidations of his unknown hero. Subsequently, when the second volume appeared, which contains the translation, it is preceded by "A Postscript to the Preface," far more important. Here, with the graceful repentance of precipitate youth, he moans over the past, and warns the reader of "the postscript to cut away the preface, root and branch," for all that he had published was delusion! — particularly "all that part of my preface which assigns dates to one prince or another, I declare to be null and void!" The result of all this scholar's painful researches is, that Mr. Kemble is left in darkness, with Beowulf in his hand; an ambiguous being,

god or a nonentity; but the poem which records his exploits must at least be true, — true in the manners it paints and the emotions which the poet reveals, — the emotions of his contemporaries.

BEOWULF,* a chieftain of the Western Danes, was the Achilles of the North. We first view him, with his followers, landing on the shores of a Danish kingling. A single ship with an armed company, in those predatory days, could alarm a whole realm. The petty independent provinces of Greece afford a parallel; for Thucydides has marked this period in society, when plunder well fought for was honored as an heroic enterprise. When a vessel touched on a strange shore, the adventurers were questioned "whether they were thieves," — a designation which the inquirers did not intend as a term of reproach: nor was it scorned by the valiant; †

whom the legend creates with supernatural energies, and history labors to reduce to mortal dimensions.

The fault is hardly that of our honest Anglo-Saxon, as trustful of the Danes as his forefathers were heretofore. It is these, our old masters, who, with Count Suhm, the voluminous annalist of Denmark, at their head, have "treated mythic and traditional matters as ascertained history. It is the old story of Minos, Lycurgus, or Numa, furbished up for us in the North." What a delightful phantasmagoria comes out while we remain in darkness! But a Danish Niebuhr may yet illuminate the whole theatre of this Pantheon.

* These Teutonic heroes were frequently denominated by the names of animals, which they sometimes emulated. Thus the hero exulting in bone and nerve was known as "the Bear;" the more insatiable, as "the Wolf;" and "the Wild Deer" is the common appellative of a warrior. The term "Deer" was the generic name for animal, and not then restricted to its present particular designation.

"Rats and mice, and such SMALL DEER,"

baffled our Shakspearian commentators, who rarely looked to the great source of the English language, — the Anglo-Saxon; and, in their perplexity, proposed to satisfy the modern reader by a botch of their own, and read *geer* or *cheer*. Percy discovered, in the old metrical romance of "Sir Bevis of Southampton," the very distich which Edgar had parodied. — *Warton*, iii. 83.

† Thucydides, lib. i.

for the spoliation of foreigners, at a time when the law of nations had no existence, seemed no disgrace, while it carried with it something of glory, when the chieftain's sword maintained the swarm of his followers, or acquired for himself an extended dominion.

Beowulf was a mailed knight, and his gilded ensign hung like a meteor in the air, and none knew the fate it portended. The warder of the coast (for in those days many a warder kept "ocean-watch" on the sea-cliffs) takes horse, and hastens to the invader. Fearlessly he asks, "Whence and what are ye? Soonest were best to give me answer."

The hero had come, not to seek feud nor to provoke insult, but with the free offering of his own life to relieve the sovereign of the Eastern Danes, whose thanes for twelve years had vainly perished, struggling with a mysterious being, — one of the accursed progeny of Cain, — a foul and solitary creature of the morass and the marsh. In the dead of the night, this enemy of man, envious of glory and abhorrent of pleasure, glided into the great hall of state and revelry, raging athirst for the blood of the brave there reposing in slumber. The tale had spread in songs through all Gothland. This life-devourer, who comes veiled in a mist from the marshes, may be some mythic being; but, though monstrous, it does little more than play the part of the Polyphemus of antiquity and the Ogre of modern fairyism.

In the timber-palace, chambers were but small and few; and the guests of the petty sovereign slept in the one great hall, under whose echoing roof the Witenagemot assembled, and the royal banquet was held. There each man had his "bed and bolster" laid out, with his shield at his head, and his hemlet, breastplate, and spear placed on a rack beside him, — "at all times ready for combat both in house and field."

This scene is truly Homeric; and thus we find in the early state of Greece; for the historian records this continual wear-

ing of armor, *like the barbarians*, because "their houses were unfenced, and travelling was unsafe."*

The watchman of the seas leaves not the coast, duteous in his lonely cares; while Beowulf, with his companions, marches onwards. They came to where the streets were paved; an indication, in that age, of a regal residence. The iron rings in their mailed coats rang as they trod in their "terrible armor." They reach the king's house: they hang up their shields against the lofty wall. They seat themselves on a bench, placing in a circle their mailed coats, their bucklers, and their javelins. This warlike array called forth an Ulysses, "famed for war and wisdom." They parley. The thane hastens to announce the warlike but the friendly visitor; and the hero, so famed for valor; yet would not obtrude his person, standing behind the thane; "for he knew the rule of ceremony." The prince of the East Danes joyfully exclaims, that "he had known Beowulf when a child: he remembered the name of his father, who married the only daughter of Hrethel the Goth. It is said that he has the strength of thirty men in the grip of his hand. God only could have sent him."

Beowulf, he whose beautiful ship had come over "the swan-path," may now peacefully show himself in his warlike array. Beowulf stood upon the dais: his "sark of netted mail" glittered where the armorer's skill had wrought around the war-net. Here we discover the ornamental artist as in the Homeric period. He found the prince of the East Danes, "old and bald" like Priam, seated among his earls. Our hero, whom we have observed so decorous in "his rule of ceremony," now launches forth in the commendation of his own prowess.

He who had come to vanquish a fiend exulted not less in a swimming-match in the seas, "when the waves were boiling

* Thucydides.

with the fury of winter," during seven whole days and nights, combating with the walruses.

The exploits of Beowulf are of a supernatural cast; and this circumstance has bewildered his translator amid mythic allusions, and thus the hero sinks into the incarnation of a Saxon idol, — a protector of the human race. It is difficult to decide whether the marvellous incidents be mythical, or merely exaggerations of the Northern poetic faculty. We, however, learn by these, that corporeal energies and an indomitable spirit were the glories of the hero-life; and the outbreaks of their self-complacency resulted from their own convictions, after many a fierce trial.

Such an heroic race we deem barbarous; but what are the nobler spirits of all times but the creatures of their age? who, however favored by circumstances, can only do that which is practicable in the condition of society.

Henforth, the son of Eglaff, sate at the feet of the king. Jealousy stirred in his breast at the prowess of "the proud seafarer." This cynical minister of the king ridicules his youthful exploits, and sarcastically assured the hero, that "he has come to a worse matter now, should he dare to pass the space of one night with the fiend." This personage is the Thersites of our Northern Homer: —

> "With witty malice studious to defame;
> Scorn all his joy, and laughter all his aim."

And, like Thersites, the son of Eglaff receives a blasting reproach: "I tell thee, son of Eglaff, drunken with mead, that I have greater strength upon the sea than any other man. We two" (he alludes to his competitor), "when we were but boys, with our naked swords in our hands, where the waves were fiercest, warred with the walruses. The whale-fish dragged me to the bottom of the sea, grim in his gripe: the mighty sea-beast received the war-rush through my hand. The sea became calm, so that I beheld the ocean promontories,

as the light broke from the east. Never since have the sea-sailors been hindered of their way; never have I heard of a harder battle by night under the concave of heaven, nor of a man more wretched on the ocean-streams. Of such ambushes, and fervor of swords, I have not heard aught of thee; else had the fiend I come to vanquish never accomplished such horrors against thy prince. I boast not, therefore, son of Eglaff: but never have I slaughtered those of my kin; for which hast thou incurred damnation, though thy wit be good."

In this state of imperfect civilization, we discover already a right conception of the female character. At the banquet the queen appears. She greeted the young Goth, bearing in her own hand the bright sweet liquor in the twisted mead-cup. She went among the young and the old, mindful of their races. The free-born queen then sate beside the monarch. There was laughter of heroes. A bard sung serene on "the origin of things," as Iopas sang at the court of Dido, and Demodocus at that of Alcinous. The same bard again excites joy in the hall by some warlike tale. Never was banquet without poet in the Homeric times.

Here our task ends, which was not to analyze the tale of Beowulf, but solely to exhibit the manners of a primeval epoch in society. The whole romance, though but short, bears another striking feature of the mighty minstrel of antiquity. It is far more dramatic than narrative; for the characters discover themselves more by dialogue than by action.

The literary history of this Anglo-Saxon metrical romance is too remarkable to be omitted. It not only cast a new light on a disputed object in our own literary history, but awoke the patriotism of a foreign nation. Beowulf had shared the fate of Cædmon; being preserved only in a single manuscript in the Cottonian Library, where it escaped from the destructive fire of 1731, — not, however, without injury. In 1705,

Wanley had attempted to describe it; but he did not surmount the difficulty. Our literary antiquaries, with Ritson for their leader, stubbornly asserted that the Anglo-Saxons had no metrical romance, as they opined by their scanty remains. The learned historian of our Anglo-Saxons, in the progress of his ceaseless pursuit, unburied this hidden treasure, which at once refuted the prevalent notions; but this literary curiosity was fated to excite deeper emotions among the honest Danes.

The existing manuscript of "the Exploits of Beowulf" is of the tenth century; but the poem was evidently composed at a far remoter period: though, as all the personages of the romance are Danes, and all the circumstances are Danish, it may be conjectured, if it be an original Anglo-Saxon poem, that it was written when the Danes had a settlement in some parts of Britain. At Copenhagen, the patriotism of literature is ardent. The learned there claimed Beowulf as their own, and alleged that the Anglo-Saxon was the version of a Danish poem. It became one of the most ancient monuments of the early history of their country, and not the least precious to them for its connection with English affairs. The Danish antiquaries still amuse their imagination with the once Danish kingdom of Northumbria, and still call us "brothers;" as at Caen, where the whole academy still persist in disputations on the tapestry of Bayeux, and style themselves our "masters."

It was therefore a national mortification to the Danes, that it was an Englishman who had first made known this relic; and further, that it existed only in the library of England. The learned THORKELIN was despatched on a literary expedition, and a careful transcript of the manuscript of Beowulf was brought to the learned and patriotic Danes. It was finished for the press, accompanied by a translation and a commentary, in 1807. At the siege of Copenhagen, a British bomb fell on the study of the hapless scholar, annihilating "Beowulf," transcript, translation, and commentary, — the toil

of twenty years. It seemed to be felt by the few, whose losses by sieges never appear in royal gazettes, as not one of the least in that sad day of warfare with "our brothers." THORKELIN was urged to restore the loss. But it was under great disadvantages that his edition was published in 1815. Mr. Kemble has redeemed our honor by publishing a collated edition, afterwards corrected in a second with a literal version. Such versions may supply the wants of the philologist; but, for the general reader, they are doomed to be read like vocabularies. Yet, even thus humbled and obscured, BEOWULF aspires to a poetic existence. He appeals to nature, and excites our imagination; while the monk CÆDMON, restricted by his faithful creed and his pertinacious chronology, seems to have afforded more delight by his piety than the other by his genius, and remains renowned as "the Milton of our forefathers."

THE ANGLO-NORMANS.

THE Anglo-Saxon dominion in England endured for more than five centuries.

A territorial people had ceased to be roving invaders, but stood themselves in dread of the invasions of their own ancient brotherhood. They trembled on their own shores at those predatory hordes who might have reminded them of the lost valor of their own ancestors. But their warlike independence had passed away; and, as a martial abbot declared of his countrymen, "they had taken their swords from their sides, and had laid them on the altar, where they had rusted, and their edges were now too dull for the field." * They could not even protect the soil which they had conquered, and often wanted the courage to choose a king of their own race. Sometimes they stood ready to pay tribute to the Dane, and sometimes suffered the throne to be occupied by a Danish monarch. In a state of semi-civilization, their rude luxury hardly veiled their unintellectual character. Feeble sovereigns and a submissive people could not advance into national greatness.

When the Duke of Normandy visited his friend and kinsman, Edward the Confessor, he beheld in England a mimetic Normandy: Norman favorites were courtiers, and Norman soldiers were seen in Saxon castles. Edward, long estranged from his native realm, had received his education in Nor-

* Speed, 441. This was said to "the Conqueror;" and this Abbot of St. Alban's paid dearly for the patriotism which had then become treason.

mandy; and the English court affected to imitate the domestic habits of these French neighbors, — the great speaking the foreign idiom in their houses, and writing in French their bills and accompts.* Already there was a faction of Frenchified Saxons in the court of the unnational English sovereign.

William the Norman surveyed an empire already half Norman; and in the prospect, with his accustomed foresight, he mused on a doubtful succession. A people who had often suffered themselves to fall the prey of their hardier neighbor, lie open for conquest to a more intelligent and polished race.

The victory of Hastings did not necessarily include the conquest of the people, and William still condescended to march to the throne under the shadow of a title. After a short residence of only three months in his newly acquired realm, "the Conqueror" withdrew into his duchy, and there passed a long interval of nine months. William left many an unyielding Saxon: a spirit of resistance, however suppressed, bound men together, and partial insurrections seemed to be pushing on a crisis which might have reversed the conquest of England.†

* A circumstance which Milton has recorded.

† Our great lawyers probably imagined that the honor of the country is implicated in the title usually accorded to William the Norman. SPELMAN, the great antiquary, and BLACKSTONE, the historian and the expounder of our laws, have absolutely explained away the assumed title of "the Conqueror" to a mere technical feudal term of "*conquestor, or acquirer of any estate out of the common course of inheritance.*" The first purchaser (that is, he who brought the estate into the family which at present owns it) was styled "the Conqueror;" *and such is still the proper phrase in the law of Scotland.* RITSON is indignant at what he calls "a pitiful forensic quibble."

But another great lawyer and lord-chancellor, the sedate WHITELOCKE, positively asserts that "William only conquered Harold and his army; for he never was, nor *pretended to be*, the conqueror of England, although the *sycophant monks of the time* gave him that title." — WHITELOCKE'S *Hist. of England*, 33.

In a charter granting certain lands for the Church of St. Paul's, which Stowe has translated from the record in the Tower, William denominates himself, "by the grace of God, *king of Englishmen*" (*Rex Anglorum*); and

During this mysterious and protracted visit, and apparent abandonment of his new kingdom to the care of others, was a vast scheme of dominion nursed in the councils of Norman nobles, and strengthened by the boundless devotion of hardy adventurers, who were all to share in the present spoliation and the future royalty? In his prescient view, did William there anticipate a conquest of long labor and of distant days; the state, the nobles, the ecclesiastics, the people, the land, and the language, all to be changed? Hume has ventured to surmise that the mind of the Norman labored with this gigantic fabric of dominion. It is probable, however, that this child of a novel policy was submitted to a more natural gestation, and expanded as circumstances favored its awful growth. One night in December, the king suddenly appeared in England; and soon unlimited confiscations and royal grants apportioned the land of the Saxons among the lords of Normandy, and even their lance-bearers. It seemed as if every new-comer brought his castles with him, so rapidly did castles cover the soil.* These were strongholds for the tyrant

addresses it "to all his well-beloved *French and English people*, greeting." — STOWE'S *Survey of London*, 326, edit. 1603. Did William on any occasion declare that he was "the Conqueror" as well as the sovereign of England? When William attempted to learn the Saxon language, it is obvious that he did not desire to remind his new subjects that he ruled as Voltaire sung of his hero: —

"Qui regna sur la France,
Par droit de Conquête et par droit de Naissance."

* The final history of these citadels may illustrate that verse of Goldsmith which reminds us, —

"To fly from PETTY TYRANTS — TO THE THRONE!"

In the short space of seventy years, the owners of those castles bearded even majesty itself. These lords, by their undue share of power, were in perpetual revolt, till two royal persons, though opposed to each other, — Stephen and Maude, — decreed, for their mutual interest, the demolition of fifteen hundred and fifteen castles. They were razed by commission, or by writs to the sheriffs; and a law was further enacted, that "none hereafter, without license, should embattle his house." And thus was broken this aristocracy of castles. — See two dissertations on "Castles," by Sir ROBERT

foreigner, or open retreats for his predatory bands: stern overlookers were they of the land!

The Norman lords had courts of their own; sworn vassals to their suzerain, but kinglings to the people. Sometimes they beheld a Saxon lord, whose heart could not tear itself from the lands of his race, a serf on his own soil; but they witnessed without remorse the rights of the sword. Norman prelates were silently substituted for Saxon ecclesiastics, and whole companies of claimants arrived to steal into benefices or rush into abbeys. It was sufficient to be a foreigner, and land in England, to become a bishop or an abbot. Church and State were now indissolubly joined; for, in the general plunder, each took their orderly rank. It was the triumph of an enlightened, perhaps a cunning race, as the Norman has been proverbially commemorated, over "a rustic and almost an illiterate generation," as the simplicity of our Saxon prelates, who could not always speak French, is described by Ordericus Vitalis, a monk, who, long absent from England, wrote in Normandy. Ingulphus, the monk of Croyland, though partial to "the Conqueror," however, honestly confesses, that, when the English were driven from their dignities, their successors were not always their superiors.

All who were eager to court their new lords were brought to dissemble their native rusticity. They polled their crowns; they cut short their flowing hair; and, throwing aside the loose Saxon gown, they assumed the close vest of the more agile Norman. "Mail of iron, and coats of steel, would have better become them!" cried an indignant Saxon. We have

SUTTON and by AGARD; "Curious Discourses by Eminent Antiquaries," i. 104 and 188.

This number of castles seems incredible: possibly many were "embattled houses." My learned friend, the Rev. Joseph Hunter, an antiquary most versant in manuscripts, inclines to think there may be some scriptural error of the ancient scribe, who was likely to add or to leave out a cipher, without much comprehension of the numerals he was transcribing without a thought, like what happened to the eleven thousand virgins of St. Ursula.

seen what a martial Saxon abbot declared to the Conqueror, while he mourned over his pacific countrymen. This was the time when it was held a shame among Englishmen to appear English. It became proverbial to describe a Saxon who ambitioned some distinguished rank, that "he would be a gentleman if he could but talk French."

Fertile in novelties as was this amazing revolution, the most peculiar was the change of the language. The style of power and authority was Norman: it interpreted the laws, and it was even to torment the rising generation of England. Children learned the strange idiom by construing their Latin into French; and thus, by learning two foreign languages together, wholly unlearned their own. Not only were they taught to speak French, but the French character was adopted in place of their own alphabet. It was a flagrant instance of the Conqueror's design to annihilate the national language, that, finding a college at Oxford with an establishment founded by Alfred to maintain divines who were "to instruct the people in their own vulgar tongue," William decreed that "the annual expense should never after be allowed out of the king's exchequer."*

The Norman prince, on his first arrival, could have entertained no scheme of changing the language; for he attempted to acquire it. The secretary of the Conqueror has recorded, that when the monarch seemed inclined to adopt the customs of his new subjects, which his moderate measures at first indicated, the Norman prince had tried his patience and his ear to babble the obdurate idiom, till he abhorred the sound of the Saxon tongue. If, because the Conqueror could not learn the Saxon language, he decided wholly to abolish it, this would seem nothing more than a fantastic tyranny; but, in truth, the language of the conquered is usually held in contempt by the conquerors, for other reasons besides offending the delicacy of the ear. The Normans could not endure the

* Speed, 440.

Saxon's untunable consonants, as it had occurred even to the unlettered Saxons themselves; for, barbarians as their hordes were when they first became the masters of Britain, they had declared that the British tongue was utterly barbarous.*

But not at his bidding could the military chief for ever silence the mother-tongue. Enough for "this stern man" to guard the land in peace, while every single hyde of land in England was known to him, and "put at its worth in HIS BOOK," as records the Saxon chronicler. The language of a people is not to be conquered as the people themselves. The "birth-tongue" may be imprisoned or banished; but it cannot die. The people think in it. The images of their thoughts, their traditional phrases, the carol over the mead-cup, and their customs far diffused, survived even the iron tongue of the curfew.

The Saxons themselves, who had chased the native Britons from their land, still found that they could not suppress the language of the fugitive people. The conquerors gave their Anglo-Saxon denominations to the towns and villages they built; but the hills, the forests, and the rivers retain their old Celtic names.† Nature and nationality will outlast the transient policy of a new dynasty.

The novel idiom became the language of those only with whom the court-language, whatever it be, will ever prevail, — the men who, by their contiguity to the great, affect to participate in their influence. In that magic circle of hopes and fears, where royalty is the sole magician of the fortunes of

* A curious fact, discovered by Mr. Turner in a Cottonian manuscript, has brought this circumstance to our knowledge. In a grant of land in Cornwall, an Anglo-Saxon king, after mentioning the Saxon name of the place, adds, "Which the inhabitants there called *barbarico nomine*, by the barbarous name of Pendyfig;" which was the British or Welsh name. — *Vindication of the Ancient British Poems*, 8.

† Camden has noticed this striking circumstance in his "Britannia." — See also Percy's Preface to Mallett's "Northern Antiquities," xxxix.

men, the Conqueror perpetuated his power by perpetuating his language. Ignorance of the French tongue was deemed a sufficient pretext for banishing an English bishop, pertinacious in his nationality, who had for a while been admitted to the royal councils, but whose presence was no longer necessary to the dominant party.

To the successors of the Norman William, it might appear that the English idiom was wholly obliterated from the memories of men. Not one of our monarchs and statesmen could understand the most ordinary words in the national tongue. When Henry the Second was in Pembrokeshire, and was addressed in English, "Goode olde kynge," the King of England inquired in French of his esquire what was meant! Of the title of "kynge," we are told that his majesty was wholly ignorant! A ludicrous anecdote of the chancellor of Richard the First is a strange evidence that the English language was wholly a foreign one for the English court. This chancellor, in his flight from Canterbury, disguised as a female hawker, carrying under his arm a bundle of cloth, and an ell-measure in his hand, sate by the sea-side, waiting for a vessel. The fishermen's wives inquired the price of the cloth. He could only answer by a burst of laughter; for this man, born in England, and chancellor of England, did not know a single word of English! One more evidence will confirm how utterly the Saxon language was cast away. When the famous Grosteste, Bishop of Lincoln (who would, no doubt, have contemned his Saxon surname of "Great-head"), a voluminous writer, once condescended to instruct "the ignorant," he wrote pious books for their use in French; the bishop making no account of the old national language, nor of the souls of those who spoke it.

When the fate of conquest had overthrown the national language, and thus seemed to have bereaved us of all our literature, it was, in reality, only diverging into a new course. For three centuries, the popular writers of England composed in the French language. Gaimar, who wrote on our Saxon

history; Wace, whose chronicle is a rhymed version of that of Geoffry of Monmouth; Benoit de Saint Maur (or Seymour); Pierre Langtoft, who composed a history of England; Hugh de Rotelande (Rutland), and so many others, — were all English. Some were descendants from Norman progenitors; but, in every other respect, they were English. Some were of a third generation.

Our Henry the Third was a prodigal patron of these Anglo-Norman poets. This monarch awarded to a romancer, Rusticien de Pise, who has proclaimed the regal munificence to the world, a couple of fine "chateaux;" which I would not, however, translate as has been done by the English term "castles." Well might a romancer, so richly remunerated, promise his royal patron to finish "the Book of Brut," the never-ending theme to the ear of a British monarch, who, indeed, was anxious to possess such an authentic state-paper. Who this Rusticien de Pise was, one cannot be certain; but he was one of a numerous brood, who, stimulated by "largesses" and fair chateaux, delighted to celebrate the chivalry of the British court, to them a perpetual fountain of honor and preferment. We may now smile at the Count de Tressan's querulous nationality, who is indignant that the writers of the French romances of the Round Table show a marked affectation of dwelling on every thing that can contribute to the glory of the throne and court of England; preferring a fabulous Arthur to a true Charlemagne, and English knights to French paladins.* When Tressan wrote, this striking circumstance had not received its true elucidation: the hand of these writers had only flowed with their gratitude. These writers composed to gratify their sovereign, or some noble patron at the English court; for they were English natives or English subjects, long concealed from posterity as Englishmen by writing in French. It had then escaped the notice of our literary antiquaries at

* See his Preface to the prose romance of "La Fleur des Batailles."

home and abroad, that these Englishmen could have composed in no other language. How imperfect is the catalogue of early English poets by Ritson! — for it is since his day that this important fact in our own literary history has been acknowledged by the French themselves, who at length have distinguished between Norman and Anglo-Norman poets. M. Guizot was enabled by the French Government to indulge his literary patriotism by sending a skilful collector to England to search in our libraries for Norman writings; and we are told that none but Anglo-Norman writers have been found, — that is, Englishmen writing on English affairs, and so English, that they have not always avoided an unguarded expression of their dislike of foreigners, and even of Normans.

It is worthy of observation, that even those Norman writers who came young into England soon took the color of the soil; and what rather surprises us, considering the fashion of the court at that period, studied the original national language, translated our Saxon writings, and often mingled in their French verse phrases and terms which to this day we recognize as English. Of this we have an interesting evidence in an Anglo-Norman poetess, but recently known by the name of "Marie de France;" yet had she not written this single verse accidentally, —

> "Me nummerai par remembrance,
> *Marie ai num, si sui de France,*" —

we should, from her subjects and her perfect knowledge of the vernacular idiom of the English, have placed this Sappho of the thirteenth century among the women of England. This poetess tells us that she had turned into her French rhymed verse the Æsopian Fables, which one of our kings had translated into English from the Latin. This royal author could have been no other than Alfred, to whom such a collection has been ascribed. We learn from herself the occasion of her version. Her task was performed for a great personage who

read neither Latin nor English: it was done for "the *love* of the renowned Earl William Longsword," —

"Cunte Willaume,
Le plus vaillant de cest Royaume."

Who would calculate the "largesse" "Count William," this puissant Longsword, cast into the lap of this living Muse, when she offered all this melodious wisdom; whose beautiful simplicity a child might comprehend, but whose moral and politic truths would throw even the Norman Longsword into a state of rational musing? Her "Lais," short but wild "Breton Tales," which our poetess dedicated to her sovereign, our Henry the Third, are evidence that Marie could also skilfully touch the heart and amuse the fancy.

In her poems, Marie has translated many French terms into pure English, and abounds with allusions to English places and towns whose names have not changed since the thirteenth century. Her local allusions, and her familiar knowledge of the vernacular idiom of the English people, prove that "Marie," though by the accident of birth she may be claimed by France, yet by her early and permanent residence, and by the constant subjects of her writings, her "Breton Tales," and her "Fables" from the English, by her habits and her sympathies, was an Englishwoman.

At this extraordinary period, when England was a foreign kingdom, the English people found some solitary friends; and these were the rustic monk and the itinerant minstrel; for they were Saxons, but subjects too mean and remote for the gripe of the Norman, occupied in rooting out their lords to plant his own for ever in the Saxon soil.

The monks, who lived rusticated in their scattered monasteries, sojourners in the midst of their conquered land, often felt their Saxon blood tingle in their veins. Not only did the filial love of their country deepen their sympathies, but a more personal indignation rankled in their secret bosoms at

the foreign intruders, French or Italian, — the tyrannical bishop and the voluptuous abbot. There were indeed monks, and some have been our chroniclers, base-born, humiliated, and living in fear, who in their leiger-books, when they alluded to their new masters, called them "the conquerors," noticed the year when some "conqueror" came in, and recorded what "the conquerors" had enacted. All these "conquerors" designated the foreigners, who were the heads of their houses. But there were other truer Saxons. Inspired equally by their public and their private feeling, these were the first, who, throwing aside both Latin and French, addressed the people in the only language intelligible to them. The patriotic monks decided that the people should be reminded that they were Saxons; and they continued their history in their own language.

This precious relic has come down to us, — the "Saxon Chronicle," * — but which in fact is a collection of chronicles made by different persons. These Saxon annalists had been eye-witnesses of the transactions they recorded; and this singular detail of incidents as they occurred, without comment, is a phenomenon in the history of mankind, like that of the history of the Jews contained in the Old Testament, and, like that, as its learned editor has ably observed, "a regular and chronological panorama of a people described in rapid succession by different writers, through many ages, in their own VERNACULAR LANGUAGE." The mutations in the language of this ancient chronicle are as remarkable as the fortunes of

* Miss Gurney, who has honorably been hailed as "the Elstob of her age," privately printed her own close version of the "Saxon Chronicle" from the printed text, 1810. Happy lady! who, when sickness had made her its prisoner, opened the "Saxon Chronicle;" and she learned that she might teach the learned.

The Rev. Dr. INGRAM, principal of Trinity College, Oxon, has since published his translation, accompanied by the original, a collation of the manuscripts, and notes critical and explanatory. 1823. 4to. A volume not less valuable than curious.

the nation in its progress from rudeness to refinement; nor less observable are the entries in this great political register from the year one of Christ till 1154, when it abruptly terminates. The meagreness of the earlier recorders contrasts with the more impressive detail of later enlarged and thoughtful minds. When we come to William of Normandy, we have a character of that monarch by one who knew him personally, having lived at his court. It is not only a masterly delineation, but a skilful and steady dissection. The earlier Saxon chronicler has recorded a defeat and retreat which Cæsar suffered in his first invasion, which would be difficult to discover in the Commentaries of Cæsar.

The true language of the people lingered on their lips, and it seemed to bestow a shadowy independence to a population in bondage. The remoter the locality, the more obdurate was the Saxon; and these indwellers were latterly distinguished as "Uplandish" by the inhabitants of cities. For about two centuries, "the Uplandish" held no social connection. Separated not only by distance, but by their isolated dialects and peculiar customs, these natives of the soil shrunk into themselves, intermarrying and dying on the same spot. They were hardly aware that they were without a country.

It was a great result of the Norman Government in England, that it associated our insular and retired dominion with that nobler theatre of human affairs, — the Continent of Europe. In Normandy we trace the first footings of our national power: the English sovereign, now a prince of France, ere long on the French soil vied in magnitude of territory with his paramount lord, the monarch of France. Such a permanent connection could not fail to produce a conformity in manners. What was passing among our closest neighbors, rivals or associates, was reflected in the old Saxon land which had lost its nationality.

THE PAGE, THE BARON, AND THE MINSTREL.

When learning was solely ecclesiastical and scholastical, there were no preceptors for mankind. The monastery and the university were far removed from the sympathies of daily life: all knowledge was out of the reach of the layman. It was then that the energies of men formed a course of practical pursuits, a system of education of their own. The singular institution of chivalry rose out of a combination of circumstances, where, rudeness and luxury mingling together, the utmost refinement was found compatible with barbaric grandeur, and holy justice with generous power. In lawless times, they invented a single law which included a whole code, — the law of knightly honor. *L'Ordenne de Chevalerie* is the morality of knighthood, and invests the aspirant with every moral and political virtue as every military qualification.*

Destitute of a national education, the higher orders thus found a substitute in a conventional system of manners. Circumstances, perhaps originally accidental, became customs sealed with the sign of honor. In this moral chaos, order marshalled confusion, as refinement adorned barbarism. A

* St. Palaye, to whom we owe the ideal of chivalry, has truly observed, "Toutes les vertus recommandées par la Chevalerie tournoient au bien public, au profit de l'Etat." It was when the causes of its institution ceased, and nothing remained but its forms without its motive, that altered manners could safely ridicule some noble qualities, which, though now displaced, have not always found equal substitutes. In the advancement of society, we may count some losses.

mighty spirit lay, as it were, in disguise; and it broke out in the forms of imagination, passion, and magnificence, seeking their objects or their semblance, and if sometimes mistaken, yet still laying the foundations of social order and national glory in Europe.

A regular course of practical pursuits was assigned to the future noble "childe" from the day that he left the parental roof for the baronial hall of his patron. In these "nurseries of nobility," as Jonson has well described such an institution, in his first charge as varlet or page, the boy of seven years was an attendant at the baron's table; and it was no humiliating office when the youth grew to be the carver and the cupbearer. He played on the viol or danced in the brawls till he was more gravely trained in "the mysteries of woods and rivers," the arts of the chase, and the sciences of the swanery and the heronry and the fishery. The springal cheerily sounded a blast of venery; or the falconer with his voice caressed his attentive hawk, which had not obeyed him had he neglected that daily flattery.

At fourteen the varlet became an esquire, vaulting on his fiery steed, and perfecting himself in all noble exercises, — nicely adroit in the science of "courtesie," or the etiquette of the court; and already this "servant of love" was taught to elect *La dame de ses pensées*, and wore her favor and her livery for "the love of honor, or the honor of love," as Sir Philip Sidney, in the style of chivalry, expressed it.

At the maturity of twenty and one years, the late varlet, and now the esquire, stood forth a candidate to blazon his shield by knighthood, — the accomplished gentleman of these Gothic days, and right learned too, if he can con his Bible and read his romance. Enchanting mirror of all chivalry, if he invent songs, and set them to his own melodies. Yet will the gentle "batchelor" be dreaming on some gallant feat of arms, or some martial achievement, whereby "to win his spurs." On his solemn entrance into the church, laying

his sword upon the altar, he resumed it by the oath which for ever bound him to defend the church and the churchmen. Thus all human affairs then were rounded by the ecclesiastical orbit, out of which no foot dared to stray. All began and all ended as the romances which formed his whole course of instruction, — with the devotion which seemed to have been addressed to man as much as to Heaven.

After the termination of the Crusades, the grand incident in the life of the BARON was a pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem. What the penitent of the Cross had failed to conquer, it seemed a consolation to kneel at and to weep over, — a custom not obsolete so late as the reigns of our last Henrys; and still, though less publicly avowed, the melancholy Jerusalem witnesses the Hebrew and the Christian performing some secret vow, to grieve with a contrition which it seems they do not feel at home.

In these peregrinations, a lordly Briton might chance to find some French or Italian knight as rash and as haughty. It was a law in chivalry, that a knight should not give way to any man who demanded it as a right, nor decline the single combat with any knight under the sun: a challenge could not, therefore, be avoided. But a *pas d'armes* was not always a friendly invitation; for often, under the guise of chivalry, was concealed the national hostility of the parties.

But when no crusade nor pilgrimage in the East, nor predatory excursion in the West, nor even the blazonry of a tournament, which fed his eyes with a picture of battle, summoned to put on his mail-coat, how was the vacant lord to wear out his monotonous days in his castle of indolence? The domestic fool stood beside him, archly sad, or gravely mirthful, as his master willed, with a proverb or a quip; and, with his licensed bawble, was the most bitterly wisest man in the castle. Patron of the costly manuscript which he could not himself read, the romancer of his household awaited his

call: the great then had fabulators or tale-tellers, as royalty has now, by title of their office, its readers. But this lord was too vigorous for repose, and the tranquillity of chess was too trying for his brain: the chess-board was often broken about the head of some mute dependant, or perchance on one who returned the dagger for the board. There was little peace for his restlessness, when, weary in his seat, his priceless Norway hawk perched above his head,* and his idle hounds spread over the floor, ceaselessly reminded him of those wide and frowning forests which were continually encroaching on the tillage of the contemned agriculturist, offering a mimetic war, not only against the bird and the beast, but man himself; for the lairs of the forest concealed the deer he chased, and often the bandit who chased the lord, — the terrible lord of this realm of wood and water, where whoever would fowl a bird or strike a buck might have his eyes torn from their sockets, or, on the spot of his offence, mount the instant gallows.†

There was a disorderly grandeur about the castellated mansion which should have required the ukase of this sovereign of many leagues, surrounded by many hundreds of his retainers; but rarely the cry of the oppressed was allowed to disturb the lord, while all within were exact in their appointments, as clock-work movements which were wound up in the government of these immense domestic establishments. Great families had their "household-books;" and, in some, the illegible hand of the lordly master himself, when the day arrived that even barons were incited to scriptural attempts,

* I recollect this trait in Chaucer. The Norway hawk was among the most valuable articles of property, valued at a sum equal to £300 of the present day. — NICHOLLS: *History of Leicestershire*, xxxix.

† The Norman William punished men with loss of eyes for taking his venery. — *Selden's Notes to Drayton's Polyolbion*, song ii.

An instant execution of two youths by the gamekeepers, at the command of their lord, appears in an ancient romance recently published in France. — *Journal des Savans*, 1838.

may yet be seen.* These nobles, it appears, were more select in their falconer and their *chef de cuisine* than in their domestic tutor; for such there was among the retainers of the household. This humiliated sage, indeed, in his own person was a model for the young varlets, on whom it was his office to inculcate that patient suppleness, and profound reverence for their lord and their superiors, which seemed to form the single principle of their education. At this period, we find a domestic proverb which evidently came from the buttery. As then eight or ten tables were to be daily covered, it is probable the chivalric epicures sometimes found their tastes disappointed by the culinary artists. It would seem that this put them into sudden outbreakings of ill-humor; for the proverb records that "the minstrels are often beaten for the faults of the cooks."

Too much leisure, too many loungers, and the tedium of prolonged banquets, a want of the pleasures of the luxurious sedentary would be as urgent as in ages more intellectual and refined; those pleasures in which we participate, though we are passive, receiving the impressions without any exertion of our own, — pleasures which make us delighted auditors or spectators. The theatre was not yet raised; but the listlessness of vacuity gave birth to all the variegated artists of revelry. If they had not comedy itself, they abounded with the comic; and, without tragedy, the tragic often moved their emotions. Nor were they even then without their scenical

* A curious specimen of these "household-books," though of a later period, is that of the Northumberland Family, printed by Bishop Percy. Many exist in manuscript, and contain particulars more valuable than the prices of commodities, for which they are usually valued. They offer striking pictures of the manners of their age. [The wardrobe accounts of Edward the Fourth, the privy purse expenses of Edward IV. and Henry VIII., have been since published by Sir Harris Nicolas; and those of the Princess Mary, afterwards Queen, by Sir Frederick Madden. The judicious notes and dissertations of these editors render them of much use in illustration of the history of each era. — Ed.]

illusions; marvels which came and vanished, as the Tregetour clapped his hands; enchantments, which, though Chaucer opined to be only "natural magic," all the world tremblingly enjoyed as the work of devils; a sensation which we have totally lost in the necromancy of our pantomimes. And thus it was, that, in the illumed hall of the feudal lord, we discover a whole dramatic company, which, however dissimilar in their professional arts, were all enlisted under the indefinite class of MINSTRELS; for, in the domestic state of society we are now recalling, the poetic minstrel must be separated from those other minstrels of very different acquirements, with whom, however, he was associated.

There were minstrels who held honorable offices in the great households, sometimes chosen for their skill and elocution to perform the dignified service of heralds, and were in the secret confidence of their lord: these were those favorites of the castle, whose guerdon was sometimes as romantic as any incident in their own romance.

No festival, public or private, but there the minstrel-poet was its crowning ornament. They awakened national themes in the presence of assembled thousands at the installation of an abbot or the reception of a bishop.* Often in the Gothic hall they resounded some lofty "Geste" or some old "Breton" lay; or with some gayer fabliau, indulging the vein of an improvvisatore, altering the old story when wanting a new one. Delightful rhapsodists or amusing tale-tellers, combining the poetic with the musical character, they displayed the influence of the imagination over a rude and unlettered race: —

"They tellen Tales
Both of WEEPYING and of GAME."

Chaucer has portrayed the rapture of a minstrel excited by his harp, — a portrait evidently after the life: —

* "Warton," i. 94.

> "Somewhat he *lisped* for his wantonness
> *To make the English swete upon his tonge;*
> And in his Harping, when that he had songe,
> *His Eyen twinkled in his Hed aright,*
> *As don the Sterrés in a frosty night.*"

The minstrel more particularly delighted "the Lewed," or the people, when, sitting in their fellowship, the harper stilled their attention by some fragment of a chronicle of their fathers and their father-land. The family harper touched more personal sympathies: the ancestral honors of the baron made even the vassal proud; domestic traditions and local incidents deepened their emotions; the moralizing ditty softened their mind with thought; and every county had its legend, at which the heart of the native beat. Of this minstrelsy, little was written down; but tradition lives through a hundred echoes, and the "reliques of ancient English poetry," and the minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, and some other remains, for the greater part, have been formed by so many metrical narratives and fugitive effusions.

There were periods in which the minstrels were so highly favored, that they were more amply rewarded than the clergy, — a circumstance which induced Warton to observe, with more truth than acuteness, that "in this age, as in more enlightened times, the people loved better to be pleased than to be instructed."* Such was their fascination and their passion for "largesse," that they were reproached with draining the treasury of a prince. It is certain that this thoughtless race have suffered from the evil eye of the monkish chroniclers, who looked on the minstrels as their rivals in sharing the prodigality of the great; yet even their monkish censors relented whenever these revellers appeared. It was a festive day among so many joyless ones, when the minstrel band approached the lone monastery. Then the sweet-toned vielle or the merry rebec echoed in the hermit-hearts of the

* "Warton," ii. 412.

slumbering inmates; vaulters came tumbling about, jugglers bewitched their eyes, and the grotesque mime, who would not be outdone by his tutored ape. Then came the stately minstrel, with his harp borne before him by his smiling page, usually called "the minstrel's boy." One of the brotherhood has described the strolling troop, who —

"Walken fer and wyde,
Her and ther, in every syde,
In many a diverse londe."

The easy life of these ambulatory musicians, their ample gratuities, and certain privileges which the minstrels enjoyed both here and among our neighbors, corrupted their manners, and induced the dissipated and the reckless to claim those privileges by assuming their title. A disorderly rabble of minstrels crowded every public assembly, and haunted the private abode. At different periods, the minstrels were banished the kingdom, in England and in France; but their return was rarely delayed. The people could not be made to abandon these versatile dispensers of solace, amid their own monotonous cares.

At different periods, minstrels appear to have been persons of great wealth, — a circumstance which we discover by their votive religious acts in the spirit and custom of those days. The Priory of St. Bartholomew in Smithfield, in 1102, was founded by "Rahere," the king's minstrel, who is described as "a pleasant-witted gentleman," such as we may imagine a wealthy minstrel, and moreover "the king's," ever to have been.* In St. Mary's Church, at Beverley in Yorkshire,

* Stowe's "Survey by Strype," book iii. 235. We might wish to learn the authority of Stowe for ascribing this "pleasant wit" to Rahere of the eleventh century. As the pen of venerable Stowe never moved idly, our antiquary must have had some information which is now lost. "The king's minstrel" is also a doubtful designation. Was the founder of this priory "a king of the minstrels"? — an office which the French also had, *Roy des Ménéstraulx*, — a governor instituted to keep order among all minstrels. Our Rahere, however "pleasant-witted," seems to have fallen into penance for his "wit;" for he became the first prior.

stands a noble column covered with figures of minstrels, inscribed, "This Pillar made the Minstrels;" and, at Paris, a chapel dedicated to St. Julian of the Minstrels was erected by them, covered with figures of minstrels, bearing all the instruments of music used in the middle ages, where the violin, or fiddle, is minutely sculptured.*

If, in these ages of romance and romancers, the fair sex were rarely approached without the devotion of idolatry, whenever "the course of true love" altered; when the frail spirit loved too late, and should not have loved, — the punishment became more criminal than the crime: for there was more of selfish revenge and terrific malignity than of justice, when autocratical man became the executioner of his own decree. The domestic chronicles of these times exhibit such harrowing incidents as those of "La Châtelaine de Vergy," where suddenly a scene of immolation struck through the devoted household; or that of "La Dame du Fayel," † who was made to eat her lover's heart. And those who had not to punish, but to put to trial, the affections of women who were in their power, had their terrible caprices, — a ferocity in their barbarous loves. Year after year, the Gothic lord

* *Antiquités Nationales*, par Millin, xli. Two plates exhibit this Gothic chapel and the various musical instruments.

† Both these romantic tales may be considered as authentic narratives, though they have often been used by the writers of fiction. *La Châtelaine de Vergy* has been sometimes confounded with *Le Châtelaine de Coucy*, the lover of *La Dame du Fayel*. The story of the Countess of Vergy (on which a romance of the thirteenth century is founded, "Hist. Litt. de France," xviii. 779) has been a favorite with the tale-tellers, — the Queen of Navarre, Bandello, and Belle Forest; and is elegantly versified in the "Fabliaux, or Tales," of Way. That of the Dame du Fayel, one of the fathers of French literary history, old Fauchet, extracted it from a good old chronicle dated two centuries before he wrote. The story is also found in an ancient romance of the thirteenth century, in the Royal Library of France. — *Hist. Litt. de la France*, xiv. 589; xvii. 644. The story of "Childe Waters," in Percy's Collection, has all the pathetic simplicity of ancient minstrelsy, which is more forcibly felt when we compare it with the *rifaccimento* by a Mrs. Pye, in Evans's Old Ballads.

failed to subdue the immortalized patience of Griselda; and such was our "Childe Waters," who put to such trials of passion, physical and mental, the maiden almost a mother. In the fourteenth century, — one century later than the histories of the "Châtelaine" and the "Dame," — either the female character was sometimes utterly dissolute, or the tyranny of husbands utterly reckless, when we find that it was no uncommon circumstance, that women were strangled by masked assassins, or, walking by the river-side, were plunged into it. This drowning of women gave rise to a popular proverb: "It is nothing, — only a woman being drowned!" La Fontaine, probably without being aware of this allusion to a practice of the fourteenth century, has preserved the proverbial phrase in his "La Femme noyée," beginning, —

> "Je ne suis pas de ceux qui disent ce n'est rien,
> C'est une Femme qui se noye!" *

The personages and the manners here imperfectly sketched constituted the domestic life of our chivalric society from the twelfth century to the first civil wars of England. In this long interval, few could read; even bishops could not always write; and the Gothic baron pleaded the privilege of a layman for not doing the one nor the other.

The intellectual character of the nation can only be traced

* Montaigne was so well acquainted with this practice, that he has used it as a familiar illustration of the obstinacy of some women, which, I suppose, the good man imagined could not be paralleled by instances from the masculine sex. However, his language must not be disguised by a modern version: "Celui qui forgea le conte de la femme qui, pour aucune correction de ménaces et bastonnades, ne cessait d'appeler son mari, Pouilleux, et qui, précipité dans l'eau, haussoit encore, en s'étouffant, les mains et faisoit au-dessus de sa tête signe de tuer des poux, forgea un conte duquel en vérité tous les jours on voit l'image expresse de l'opiniâtreté des femmes."

The punishment of our "ducking-stool" for female brawlers possibly originated in this mediæval practice of throwing women into the river; but this is but an innocuous baptism, while we find the obstinate wife here, who probably spoke true enough, *s'étouffant*, — merely for correcting the filthy lubbard, her lord and master.

in the wandering minstrel and the haughty ecclesiastic. The minstrel, mingling with all the classes of society, reflected all their sympathies, and, in reality, was one of the people themselves; but the ecclesiastic stood apart, too sacred to be touched, while his very language was not that either of the noble or of the people.

A dense superstition overshadowed the land from the time of the first crusade to the last. It may be doubtful whether there was a single Christian in all Christendom; for a new sort of idolatry was introduced in shrines and relics and masses, holy wells, awful exorcisms, saintly vigils, month's minds, pilgrimages afar and penances at home, lamp-lighting before shrines decked with golden images, and hung with votive arms and legs of cripples who recovered from their rheumatic ails. The enthusiasm for the figure of the cross conferred a less pure sanctity on that memorial of pious tribulation. Everywhere it was placed before them. The crusader wore that sign on his right shoulder; and, when his image lay extended on his tomb, the crossed legs were reverently contemplated. They made the sign of the cross, by the motion of their hand, in peril or in pleasure, in sorrow and in sin; and expected no happy issue in an adventure, without frequently signing themselves with the cross. The cross was placed at the beginning and at the end of their writings and inscriptions, and it opened and closed the alphabet. The mystical virtues of the cross were the incessant theme of the monachal orders, and it was kissed in rapture on the venal indulgence expedited by the papal hierophant. As, even in sacred things, novelty and fashion will perversely put in their claim, we find the writers and sculptors varying the appearance of the cross: its simple form ✠ became enclosed in a circle ⊕, and again varied by dots ⁘ * The guardian cross protected a locality; and in England, at the origin of parishes,

* Leland's "Itinerary," ii. 126.

the cross stood as the hallowed witness which marked the boundaries, and which it had been sacrilege to disturb. It was no unusual practice to place the sign at the head of private letters, however trivial the contents, as we find it in charters and other public documents. In one of the Paston Letters, the piety of the writer, at a much later period, could not detail the ordinary occurrences of the week without inserting the sacred letters I.H.S.; and similar invocations are found in others.*

The material symbol of Christianity had thus been indiscriminately adopted, without conveying with it the virtues of the gospel. The cross was a myth; the cross was the *Fetish* † of an idolatrous Christianity: they bowed before it, they knelt to it, they kissed it, they kissed a palpable and and visible deity. Never was the Divinity rendered more familiar to the gross understandings of the vulgar; and, in these ages of unchristian Christianity, the cross was degraded even to a vulgar mark, which conveniently served for the signature of some unlettered baron.

* Paston's "Letters," v. 17.

† See the very curious chapter on the "Fetish Worship," in that very original and learned work, "The Doctor," v. 133.

GOTHIC ROMANCES.

A NEW species of literature arose in the progress of that practical education which society had assumed, — a literature addressed to the passions which rose out of the circumstances of the times; dedicated to war, to love, and to religion, when the business of life seemed restricted to the extreme indulgence of those ennobling pursuits. In too much love, too much war, too much devotion, it was not imagined that knights and ladies could ever err. If sometimes the loves were utterly licentious, wondrous tales are told of their immaculate purity. If their religion were then darkened by the grossest superstition, their faith was genuine, and would have endured martyrdom; and, if the chivalric valor often exulted in its ferocity and its rapacity, its generous honor amid a lawless state of society maintained justice in the land, by the lance which struck the oppressor, and by the shield which covered the helpless.

Every thing had assumed a more extended form; the pageantry of society had varied and multiplied; the banquet was prolonged; the festival-day was frequent; the ballad narrative or the spontaneous lyric, which had sufficed their ruder ancestors to allure attention, now demanded more volume and more variety; the Romance with a deeper interest was to revolve in the entangling narrative of many thousand lines. There was a traditional store, a stock of fabling in hand, heroical panegyrics, satirical songs, and legendary ballads: all served as the stuff for the looms of mightier weavers of rhyme,

whose predecessors had left them this inheritance. The marvellous of Romance burst forth; and this stupendous fabric of invention bewitched Europe during three centuries.

Romance, from the light fabliau to the voluminous fiction, has admitted, in the luxury of our knowledge and curiosity, not only of critical investigation, but of its invention, by tracing it to a single source. The origin of Romance has been made to hinge on a theoretical history; and by maintaining exclusive systems, mostly fanciful and partly true, it has been made complicate. Whether invention, in the form of Romance, came from the Oriental tale-teller or the Scandinavian scald, or whether the fictions of Europe be the growth of the Provençal or the Armorican soil, our learned inquirers have each told; nor have they failed in considerably diminishing the claims of each particular system opposed to their own. But the greatest error will be found in their mutual refutations.* While each stood intrenched in an exclusive system, they were only furnishing an integral portion of a boundless and complicate inquiry. They scrutinized with microscopic eyes into that vast fabric of invention, which the Gothic genius may proudly oppose to the fictions of antiquity; and they seemed at times forgetful of the vicissitudes, which, at distant intervals and by novel circumstances, enlarged and modified the changeful state of romantic fiction among every people.

In the attempt to retrace the Nile of Romance to a solitary source, in the eagerness of their discoveries they had not yet ascertained that this Nile bears many far-divided heads, and some from which Time shall never remove its clouds; for who dares assign an origin to the ancient Milesian tales, — the tales and their origin being alike lost? †

* Warton and Percy, Ritson and Leyden, Ellis and Turner and Price, and recently the late Abbé de la Rue.

† A profound and poetic genius has thrown out a new suggestion on the origin of these Eastern tales. "I think it not unlikely that the 'Milesian

Warton, encumbered by his theory of an Eastern origin, opened the map to track the voyage of an Arabian tale. He landed it at Marseilles, — that port by which ancient Greece first held its intercourse with our Europe; and thence the tale was sent forwards through genial Italy, but forced to harbor in this voyage of Romance at the distant shores of Brittany, that land of Romance and of the ancient Briton. The result of his system startled the literary world by his assumption, that "the British history" of Geoffry of Monmouth entirely consists of Arabian inventions, — the real source of the airy existence of our British Arthur! Bishop Percy had been nearly as adventurous in his Gothic origin, by landing a number of the Northern bards with the army of Rollo in Normandy; an event which contributed to infuse the scaldic genius into the Romances of chivalry, whose national hero is Charlemagne, — the tutelary genius of France and Germany.

They had looked to the East and to the North; and, wherever they looked for the origin of Romance, it was found. They had sought in a corner of the universe for that which is universal.

Romance sprang to birth in every clime, native wherever she is found, notwithstanding that she has been a wanderer among all lands, and as prodigal a dispenser as she has been free in her borrowings and artful in her concealments.

The art of fabling may be classed among the mimetic arts. It is an aptitude of the universal and plastic faculties of our nature; and man might not be ill defined and charactered as "a mimetic and fabling animal."

Tales' contained the germs of many of those *now in the* 'Arabian Nights.' The Greek Empire must have left deep impressions on the Persian intellect: so also many of the Roman-Catholic *legends* are taken from *Apuleius*. The exquisite story of Cupid and Psyche is evidently a philosophical attempt to parry Christianity with a quasi Platonic account of the fall and redemption of man." — *Coleridge's Literary Remains*, i. 180. Whatever were these "Milesian Tales," they amused the Grecian sages in the earliest period of their history.

The earliest Romances appear in a metrical form about the middle of the twelfth century. The first were "Estoires," or pretended chronicles, like that of the Brut of Wace. The Romances of martial achievement then predominated, — those of the Knights of Arthur, and the Paladins of Charlemagne: the adventures of love and gallantry were of a later epoch. In the mutability of taste, an extraordinary transition occurred: after nearly two centuries passed in rhyming, all the verse was to be turned into prose. Whether voluminous rhymes satiate the public ear, or novelty in the form was sought even when they had but little choice, the writers of Romance, a very flexible gentry, who, of all other writers, servilely accommodate themselves to the public taste, with more fluent pens loitered into a more ample page; or, as they expressed themselves, *translatés de rime en prose*, or *mis en beau langage*. Many of the old French metrical Romances, in the fourteenth century, were disguised in this humbled form; but their *mensogne magnanime*, to use Tasso's style, who loved them, lost nothing in number or in hardihood. On the discovery of the typographic art, in the fifteenth century, many of these prose Romances in manuscript received a new life by passing through the press; and these, in their venerable *lettres Gothiques*, are still hoarded for the solace of the curious in fictions of genuine antiquity, and of invention in its prime, both at home and abroad; and, in a reduced form, we find them surviving among the people on the Continent. It is singular that the metrical Romances seem never to have received the honors conferred on the prose.*

These Romances, in their manuscript state, were cherished objects.† The mighty tomes, sometimes consisting of forty or

* Ritson and Weber have elegantly printed some of the best English metrical romances. In France they have recently enriched literature with many of these manuscript romances. — See "Gentleman's Magazine," October, 1839.

† It is a curious fact, that, in 1390, Sir James Douglas, of Dalkeith, the ancestor of the Earl of Morton, apparently valued them as about equal to

fifty thousand lines, described as those "great books of parchment" or "the great book of Romances," were usually embellished by the pen and the pencil with every ornament that fancy could suggest; bound in crimson velvet, guarded by clasps of silver, and studded with golden roses; profuse of gorgeous illuminations, and decorated with the most delicate miniatures, "limned with gold of graver's work" on an azure ground; or the purple page setting off the silvery letters, — objects then of perpetual attraction to the story-believing reader, and which now charm the eye which could not as patiently con the endless page. The fashions of the times are exactly shown in the dresses and the domestic furniture; as well as their instruments, military and musical.

Studies for the artist, as for the curious antiquary,* we may view the plumage in a casque curved and falling with peculiar grace, and a lady's robe floating in its amplitude; and ornaments of dress arranged, which our taste might emulate. A French amateur, who possessed "Le Roman de la Violette," a Romance of a fabulous Count of Nevers, was so deeply struck by its exquisite and faithful miniatures, that he employed the best artists to copy the most interesting, and placed them in his collection of the costume and fashions of the French nation, — a collection preserved in the Royal Library of France.† If their hard outline does not always flow into grace, their imagination worked under the mysterious influence of the Romance through all their devoted labor. In a group of figures, we may observe that the heads are not me-

the statutes of the realm; for he bequeathed in his will to his son, "omnes libros meos tam *Statutorum* Regni Scocie quam *Romancie*." — *Laing's Early Metrical Tales*, Edinburgh, 1826.

* A collection of these romances, formed into three folio tomes in manuscript, was enriched by seven hundred and forty-seven miniatures, *avec les Initiales peintes en or et couleurs.* 6093, Roxburgh Cat.

† Cat. of the Duke de la Vallière, 4507. Strutt would have done as much for ourselves; but he worked in unrequited solitude, with all the passion of the French amateur, but without his "best artists."

chanically cast by one mould; but the distinct character looks as if the thoughtful artist had worked out his recollections on which he had meditated. In some of the heads, portraits of distinguished persons have been recognized. Not less observable are the arabesques often found on the margins, where the playful pencil has prodigally flung flowers and fruit, imitating the bloom, or insects which look as if they had lighted on the leaf. These margins, however, occasionally exhibit arabesques of a very different character; figures or subjects which often amused the pencil of the monastic limners, satirical strokes aimed at their brothers and sisters, — the monks and the nuns. I have observed a wolf, in a monk's frock and cowl, stretching its paw to bless a cock bending its submissive head; a cat, in the habit of an abbess, holding a platter in its paws to a mouse approaching to lick it, — alluding to the allurements of abbesses to draw young women into the convents; and a sow, in a nun's veil, mounted on stilts. A pope appears to be thrown by devils into a caldron, and cardinals are roasting on spits. All these expressions of suppressed opinion must have been executed by the monks themselves. These reformers before the Reformation sympathized with the popular feeling against the haughty prelate and the luxurious abbot.

The great Romance of Alexander, preserved in the Bodleian Library, reveals a secret of the cost of time freely bestowed on that single and mighty tome. The illuminator, by preserving the date when he had completed his own work compared with that of the transcriber when he had finished his part, appears to have employed nearly six years on the paintings which embellish this precious volume.*

Such a metrical Romance was a gift presented to royalty,

* This romance was composed about the year 1200. The present copy was made in 1338. There is also a splendid manuscript, with rich and delicate illuminations of the ancient romance of Alexander in prose, in the Brit. Mus., Bib. Reg. 15, E. 6.

when engrossed by the rapturous hand of the Romancer himself. The autograph, in a presentation-copy, might count on the meed of "massy goblets" when the munificent patron found the new volume delectable to his taste; which indeed had been anticipated by the writer. This incident occurred to Froissart in presenting his Romance to Richard the Second; when, in reply to his majesty's inquiry after the contents, the author exultingly told that "the book treated of Amour."

To the writers of these ancient Romances we cannot deny a copious invention, a variegated imagination, and, among their rambling exuberances and their grotesque marvels, those enchanting enchantments which the Greeks and Romans only partially and coldly raised. We may often, too, discover that truth of human nature which is not always supposed to lie hid in these desultory compositions. Amid their peculiar extravagances, which at least may serve to raise an occasional smile, the strokes of nature are abundant, and may still form the studies of the writers of fiction, however they may hang on the impatience of the writers and the readers of our duodecimos. Ancient writers are pictorial: their very fault contributes to produce a remarkable effect, — a fulness often overflowing, but which at least is not a scantiness leaving the vagueness of imperfect description. Their details are more circumstantial, their impressions are more vivid, and they often tell their story with the earnestness of persons who had conversed with the actors, or had been spectators of the scene. We may be wearied, as one might be at a protracted trial by the witnesses; but we are often struck by an energetic reality which we sometimes miss in their polished successors. Their copiousness, indeed, is without selection: they wrote before they were critics; but their truth is not the less truth because it is given with little art.

The dilations of the metrical Romances into tomes of prose, Warton considered as a proof of the decay of invention. Was not this censure rather the feeling of a poet for his art,

than the decision of a critic? — for the more extended scenes of the Romances in prose required a wider stage, admitted of a fuller dramatic effect in the incidents, and a more perfect delineation of the personages through a more sustained action. If the prose Romances are not epics by the conventional code of the Stagirite, at least they are epical; and some rude Homers sleep among these old Romancers, metrical or prosaic. A living poetic critic, one best skilled to arbitrate, — for he is without any prepossessions in favor of our ancient writers, — has honestly acknowledged their faithfulness to nature in their touching simplicity. "Nor," he adds, "do they less afford, by their bolder imagination, adequate subjects for the historical pencil." And he has more particularly noticed "Le bone Florence de Rome;" thus written by our ungrammatical minstrels. "Classical poetry has scarcely ever conveyed in shorter boundaries so many interesting and complicated events as may be found in this good old Romance." * This indeed is so true, that we find these romantic tales were not only recited or read, but their subjects were worked into the tapestries which covered the walls of their apartments. The Bible and the Romance equally offered subjects, to eyes learned in the "Estoires," never to be forgotten.

Our master-poets have drawn their waters from these ancient fountains. SIDNEY might have been himself one of their heroes, and was no unworthy rival of his masters. SPENSER borrowed largely, and repaid with munificence. MILTON, in his loftiest theme, looked down with admiration on this terrestrial race, —

> "And what resounds
> In fable or romance of Uther's son,
> Begirt with British or Armoric knights."

"In 'Amadis of Gaul,'" has said our true laureate, "may be found the Zelmane of the 'Arcadia,' the Masque of Cupid of

* Campbell's "Essay on English Poetry."

the 'Faery Queen,' and the Florizel of the 'Winter's Tale.' Sidney, Spenser, and Shakspeare imitated this book: was ever book honored by three such imitators?" *

A great similarity is observable among these writers of fiction, both in their incidents and the identity of their phrases; an evidence that these inventors were often drawing from a common source. In these ages of manuscripts, they practised without scruple many artifices, and might safely appropriate the happiest passages of their anonymous brothers.† One Romance would produce many by variations; the same story would serve as the groundwork of another; and the later

* Our vernacular literature owes to the unremitting ardor of our laureate recent editions of "La Morte d'Arthur," "Palmerin of England," and a new translation from the Portuguese of "Amadis of Gaul." For readers who are not antiquaries, and who may recoil from the prolixity of the ancient romances, there is a work of their species which may amply gratify their curiosity, and it is of easy acquisition. It is not an unskilful compilation from the romances of chivalry, made by RICHARD JOHNSON, a noted bookwright in the reign of Elizabeth. It has passed through innumerable editions, and has at last taken its station in the popular library of our juvenile literature. I suspect that the style has been too often altered in the modern editions, which has injured its raciness. It is well known as "the Renowned History of the Seven Champions of Christendom." The compiler has metamorphosed the Rowland, Oliver, Guy, Bevis, &c., into seven saints or champions of Christendom; but "he has preserved some of the most capital fictions of the old Arabian romance." — *Warton*, iii. 63, ed. 8vo. It may serve as a substitute for the old black-letter romances, being a compendium of their rich or their grotesque fancies; or, as Ritson observes with his accustomed energetical criticism, "it is a compound of superstition, and, as it were, all the lyes in Christendom in one lye, and is in many parts of the country believed at this day to be as true as the gospel." — *Dissertation on Romance*, xxxiv.

† One of the most celebrated romantic histories is "the Troy-book of Guido delle Colonne," which has been considered as the original of all the later tales of Troy. On the acute suggestion of Tyrwhit, Douce ascertained that this fabulous history, by many regarded as original, is only a Latin translation of a Norman poet,[1] which Guido passes off as a history collected from Dares and other fictitious authorities, but disingenuously conceals the name of Benoit de Saint Maur, whose works he appears to have found when

[1] Douce's "Illustrations of Shakspeare."

Romancer, to set at rest the scruples of the reader, usually found fault with his predecessors, who, having written the same story, had not given "the true one." By this innocent imposture, or this ingenious impudence, they designed to confer on their Romance the dignity of history. The metrical Romances pretend to translate some ancient "Cronik" which might be consulted at Caerleon, the magical palace of the vanished Arthur; or they give their own original Romance as from some "Latyn auctour," whose name is cautiously withheld; or they practise other devices, pretending to have drawn their work from "the Greek" or "the English," and even from an "unknown language." In some colophons of the prose Romances, the names of real persons are assigned as the writers;* but the same Romance is equally ascribed to different persons, and works are given as translations which in fact are originals. Amid this prevailing confusion and these contradictory statements, we must agree with the editor of Warton, that we cannot with any confidence name the author of any of these prose Romances. RITSON has aptly treated these pseudonymous translators as "men of straw." We may say of them all as the antiquary DOUCE, in the agony of his baffled researches after one of their favorite authorities, a will o' the wisp named Lollius, exclaimed, somewhat gravely, "Of Lollius it will become every one to speak with diffidence." Ariosto seems to have caught this bantering humor of mystifying his readers in his own Gothic Romance,

he came to England. It was a prevalent practice in the middle ages to appropriate a work by a cautious suppression of any mention of the original. Tiraboschi might now be satisfied that Guido delle Colonne was in England, which he doubted; since he now stands charged with only turning into Latin prose the poem of a Norman; that is, an English poet at the court of our Henry the Second.

* In the curious catalogue of these romances in the Roxburgh Library, the cataloguer announced three or four of these pretended authors as "names unknown to any literary historians," and considered the announcement a literary discovery.

gravely referring his extravagances to "the chronicle of the pseudo Archbishop Turpin" for his voucher! What was with the Italian but a playful stroke of satire on the pretended verity of Turpin himself, may have covered a more serious design with these ancient Romance-writers. Père Menestrier ascribed these productions to heralds, who, he says, were always selected for their talents, their knowledge, and their experience; qualifications not the most essential for Romance-writing. "According to the bad taste of those ignorant ages," he proceeds, "it is from them so many Romances on feats of arms and on chivalry issued, by which they designed to elevate their own office, and to celebrate their voyages in different lands." * St. Palaye, in adopting this notion of these heraldical Romancers, with more knowledge of the ancient Romancers than the good father possessed, has added a more numerous body (the *Trouvères*), who, either in rehearsing or in composing these poetical narratives, might urge a stronger claim.

When Père Menestrier imagined that it was the intention of these heralds, by these Romances, "to celebrate their voyages in different lands," it seems to have escaped him that "the voyages" of these Romancers to the visionary Caerleon, to England, or to Macedonia, were but a geography of Fairy-land.

In the history of literature, we here discover a whole generation of writers, who, so far from claiming the honor of their inventions, or aspiring after the meed of fame, have even studiedly concealed their claims, and, with a modesty and caution difficult to comprehend, dropped into their graves without a solitary commemoration.

These idling works of idlers must have been the pleasant productions of persons of great leisure, with some tincture of literature, and to whom, by the peculiarity of their condition,

* Père Menestrier, "Chevalerie, Ancienne et Moderne," chap. 5. On Heralds.

fame was an absolute nullity. Who were these writers who thus contemned fame? Who pursued the delicate tasks of the illuminator and the calligrapher? Who adorned Psalters with a religious patience, and expended a whole month in contriving the vignette of an initial letter? Who were these artists who worked for no gain? In those ages, the ecclesiastics were the only persons who answer to this character; and it would only be in the silence and leisure of the monastery that such imaginative genius and such refined art could find their dwelling-place. I have sometimes thought that it was Père Hardouin's conviction of all this literary industry of the monks which led him to indulge his extravagant conjecture, that the classical writings of antiquity were the fabrications of this sedentary brotherhood; and his "pseudo-Virgilius" and "pseudo-Horatius" astonished the world, though they provoked its laughter.

The Gothic mediæval periods were ages of imagination, when, in art, works of amazing magnitude were produced, while the artists sent down no claims to posterity. We know not who were the numerous writers of these voluminous Romances; but, what is far more surprising, we are nearly as unacquainted with those great and original architects who covered our land with the palatial monastery, the church, and the cathedral. In the religious societies themselves, the genius of the Gothic architect was found: the bishop or the abbot planned while they opened their treasury, and the sculptor and the workmen were the tenants of the religious house. The devotion of labor and of faith raised these wonders, while it placed them beyond the unvalued glory which the world can give.*

We cannot think less than Père Hardouin, that there were no poetical and imaginative monks — Homers in cowls, and Virgils who chanted vespers — who could compose in their

* See Bentham's "History and Antiquities of Ely," 27.

unoccupied day more beautiful Romances than their crude legends or the dry annals of the leiger-book of their abbey. Some knowledge these writers had of the mythological, and even the Homeric and Virgilian fictions; for they often gave duplicates of the classical fables of antiquity. Circe was a fair sorceress, the one-eyed Polyphemus a dread giant, and Perseus bestrode a winged dragon, before they were reflected in Romances. But what we discover peculiar in these works is a strange mixture of sacred and profane matters, always treated in a manner which scents of the cloister. Before he enters the combat, the knight is often on his knees, invoking his patron-saint; he proffers his vows on holy relics; while ladies placed in the last peril or the most delicate positions, by their fervent repetitions of the sign of the cross or a vow to found an abbey, are as certainly saved: and, for another refined stroke of the monachal invention, the heroes often close their career in a monastery or a hermitage. The monkish morality which sat loosely about them, was, however, rigid in its ceremonial discipline. Lancelot de Lac leaves the bed of the guilty Genevra, the queen of the good King Arthur, at the ring of the matin-bell, to assist at mass: so scrupulous were such writers, that, even in criminal levities, they should not neglect all the offices of the Church. The subject of one of these great Romances is a search after the cup which held the real blood of Christ; and this history of the *Sang-real* forms a series of Romances. Who but a monk would have thought, and even dared to have written it down, that all the circumstances in this Romance were not only certain, but were originally set down by the hand of Jesus himself? — and further dared to observe, that Jesus never wrote but twice before, — the Lord's Prayer, and the sentence on the woman taken in adultery. Such a pious or blasphemous fraud was not unusual among the dark fancies of the monastic legendaries.

Some of these Homers must have left their lengthening "Iliad," as Homer himself seems to have done, unfinished;

tired, or tiring; for no doubt there was often a rehearsal: "the tale half told" was resumed by some Elisha who caught the mantle his more inspired predecessor had let fall. It appears evident that several were the continuators of a favorite Romance; and, from deficient attention or deficient skill, a fatal discrepancy has been detected in the identical characters, — the ordinary fate of those who write after the ideas of another, with indistinct conceptions, or with fancies going contrary to those of the first inventor.

These metrical Romances in manuscript, and the printed prose in their original editions, are now very costly. By the antiquary and the poet, these tomes may be often opened. With the antiquary, they have served as the veritable registers of their ages. The French antiquaries, and Carte in England, have often illustrated by those ancient Romances many obscure points in geography and history. Except in the mere machinery of their fancy, these writers had no motive to pervert leading facts; for these served to give a color of authenticity to their pretended history, or to fix their locality. As they had not the erudition to display, nor were aware of the propriety of copying, the customs and manners of the age of their legendary hero, they have faithfully transmitted their own. We should never have had, but for this lucky absurdity, the "Tale of Thebes" turned into a story of the middle ages; while Alexander the Great is but the ideal of a Norman baron in the splendor and altitude of the conception of the writers. It was the ignorance of the illuminators of our Latin and Saxon manuscripts of any other country than their own which enabled Strutt to place before the eye a pictorial exhibition of our Anglo-Saxon fathers. Compared with the realities of these originals, with all their faults of tediousness, the modern copiers of ancient times, in their mock-scenes of other ages, too often reflect in the cold moonlight of their fancy a shadowy, unsubstantial antiquity.

The influence of these fabulous achievements of unconquerable heroes and of self-devoted lovers over the intellect and the passions of men and women, during that vast interval of time when they formed the sole literature, was omnipotent. In the early Romances of chivalry, when their genius was purely military, and directed to kindle a passion for joining the crusades, we rarely find adventures of the tender passion; but since women cannot endure neglect, and the female character has all the pliancy of sympathy, and has performed her part in every age on the theatre of society, we discover the extraordinary fact, that many ladies assumed the plumy helmet, and dexterously managed the lance. The ladies rode amid armed knights, resistless as themselves. It was subsequently, when we find that singularly fantastic institution of "the Courts of Love," which delivered their "Arrets" in the style of a most refined jurisprudence, that these beautiful companions-at-arms were satisfied to conquer the conquerors by more legitimate seductions, and that the Romances told of little but of loves. Ariosto and Tasso are supposed to have drawn their female warriors from the Amazonian Penthesilea and the Camilla of Homer and Virgil; but it would seem that the prototype of these feminine knights these poets also found among those old Romances which they loved.

It is unquestionable that these martial Romances of chivalry inflamed the restlessness of those numerous military adventurers who found an ample field for their chivalry after the crusades, in our continued incursions into France, of which country we were long a living plague, from the reign of Edward III. to that of Henry V., nearly a century of national tribulation. Many "a gentyl and noble esquyer," if perchance the English monarch held a truce with France or Scotland, flew into some foreign service. Sir Robert Knolles was known to the French as *le véritable démon de la guerre;* and Sir John Hawkwood, when there was no fighting to be got at home, passed over into Italy, where he approved him-

self to be such a prodigy of "a man-at-arms," that the grateful Florentines raised his statue in their cathedral: this image of English valor may still be proudly viewed. This chivalric race of Romance-readers were not, however, always of the purest "order of chivalry." If they were eager for enterprise, they were not less for its more prudential results. A castle or a ransom in France, a lordly marriage, or a domain in Italy, were the lees that lie at the bottom of their glory.

We continued long in this mixed state of glory clouded with barbarism; for, at a time when literature and the fine arts were on the point of breaking out into the splendor of the pontificate of Leo the Tenth, in our own country the great Duke of Buckingham, about 1500, held the old Romance of "the Knight of the Swan" in the highest estimation, because the translator maintained that our duke was lineally descended from that hero. The first peer of the realm was proud of deriving his pedigree from a fabulous knight in a romantic genealogy.

But all the inventions and fashions of man have their date and their termination. For three centuries, these ancient Romances, metrical or prose, had formed the reading of the few who read, and entranced the circle of eager listeners. The enchantment was on the wane; their admirers had become somewhat sceptical of "the true history" which had been so solemnly warranted: another taste in the more chastened writings of Roman and Grecian lore was now on the ascendant. One last effort was made in this decline of romantic literature, in that tessellated compilement where the mottled pieces drawn out of the French prose Romances of chivalry were finely squared together by no unskilful workman, in Sir Thomas Malory, to the English lover of ancient Romance well known by the title of "La Morte d'Arthur." This last of these ancient Romances was finished in the ninth year of the reign of Edward IV., about 1470. Cax

TON exulted to print this epical Romance; and, at the same time, he had the satisfaction of reproaching the "laggard" age. "What do ye now," exclaimed the ancient printer, "but go to the *Bagnes*, and play at dice? Leave this, leave it, and read these noble volumes!" — volumes which not many years after, when a new system of affairs had occurred to supplant this long-idolized "order of chivalry," ROGER ASCHAM plainly asserted, only taught "open manslaughter and bold bawdry." Such was the final fate of Love and Arms!

ORIGIN OF THE VERNACULAR LANGUAGES OF EUROPE.

THE predominance of the Latin language, during many centuries, retarded the cultivation of the vernacular dialects of Europe. When the barbarous nations had triumphed over ancient Rome, the language of the Latins remained unconquered: that language had diffused itself with the universal dominion, and, living in the minds of men, required neither legions nor consuls to maintain its predominance.

From accident, and even from necessity, the swarming hordes, some of whom seem to have spoken a language which had never been written, and were a roving people at a period prior to historical record, had adopted that single colloquial idiom which their masters had conveyed to them, attracted, if not by its beauty, at least by its convenience. This vulgar Latin was not, indeed, the Latin of the great writers of antiquity; but in its corrupt state, freed from a complex construction, and even from grammar, had more easily lent itself to the jargon of the ruder people. Teutonic terms, or Celtic words with corrupt Latinisms, were called "the scum of ancient eloquence, and the rust of vulgar barbarisms," by an indignant critic in the middle of the fifth century.* It was amid this confusion of races, of idioms, and of customs, that from this heterogeneous mass were hewed out those VERNACULAR DIALECTS of Europe which furnished each people

* Sidonius Apollinaris.

with their own idiom, and which are now distinguished as the MODERN LANGUAGES.

In this transference and transfusion of languages, Italy retained the sonorous termination of her paternal soil, and Spain did not forget the majesty of the Latin accent, — lands favored by more genial skies, and men blessed with more flexible organs. But the Gothic and the Northern races barbarously abbreviated or disfigured their Latin words: to sounds so new to them they gave their own rude inflections. There is but one organ to regulate the delicacy of orthoepy, — a musical and a tutored ear. The Gaul,* in cutting his words down, contracted a nasal sharpness; and the Northmen, in the shock of their hard, redundant consonants, lost the vowelly confluence.

This vulgar or corrupt Latin, mingled with this diversity of jargons, was the vitiated mother of the sister-languages of Europe, — sisters still bearing their family likeness, of the same homely origin, but of various fortunes, till some attained to the beauty and affluence of their Latin line. From the first, the people themselves had dignified their spurious generation of language as *Romans*, or *Romance*, or *Romaunt*, still proud, perhaps, of its Roman source; but the critical Latins themselves had distinguished it as *Rustic*, to indicate a base dialect used only by those who were far removed from the metropolis of the world.

* An ingenious literary antiquary has given us a copious vocabulary, as complete evidence of Latin words merely abbreviated by omitting their terminations, whence originated those numerous monosyllables which impoverish the French language. In the following instances, the Gauls only used the first syllable for the entire word, — damnum, *damn;* aureum, *or;* malum, *mal;* nudum, *nud;* amicus, *ami;* vinum, *vin;* homo, *hom*, as anciently written; curtus, *court;* sonus, *son;* bonus, *bon*, — and thus made many others.

The nasal sound of our neighbors still prevails: thus Gracchus sinks into *Gracque;* Titus Livius is but *Tite Live;* and the historian of Alexander the Great, the dignified Quintus Curtius, is the ludicrous *Quinte Curce!* — AUGUIS: *Du Génie de la Langue Françoise.*

But, when these different nations had established their separate independence, this vernacular idiom was wholly left to the people: it was the image of their own barbaric condition, unworthy of the studies, and inadequate to the genius, of any writer. The universal language maintained its pre-eminence over the particular dialect; and, as the course of human events succeeded in the overwhelming of ancient Rome, another Rome shadowed the world. Ecclesiastical Rome, whence the novel faith of Christianity was now to emanate, far more potent than military Rome, perpetuated the ancient language. The clergy, through the diversified realms of Europe, were held together in strict conformity, and by a common bond chained to the throne of the priesthood, — one faith, one discipline, one language!

The Latin tongue, both in verse and prose, was domiciliated among people of the most opposite interests, customs, and characters. The primitive fathers, the later schoolmen, the monkish chroniclers, all alike composed in Latin; all legal instruments, even marriage-contracts, were drawn in Latin; and even the language of Christian prayer was that of abolished paganism.

The idiom of their father-land, — or, as we have affection ately called it, our "mother-tongue," and, as our ancient trans lator of the "Polychronicon" energetically terms it, "the birth-tongue," — those first human accents which their infant ear had caught, and which from their boyhood were associated with the most tender and joyous recollections, every nation left to fluctuate on the lips of the populace, rude and neglected. Whenever a writer, proposing to inform the people on subjects which more nearly interested them, composed in the national idiom, it was a strong impulse only which could induce him thus to submit to degrade his genius. One of the French crusaders, a learned knight, was anxious that the nation should become acquainted with the great achievements of the deliverers of Jerusalem. It was the command of his

bishop that induced him to compose the narrative in the vernacular idiom: but the twelve years which he bestowed on his chronicle were not considered by him as employed for his glory; for he avows that the humiliating style which he had used was the mortifying performance of a religious penance.

All who looked towards advancement in worldly affairs, and were of the higher orders in society, cultivated the language of Rome. It is owing to this circumstance, observes a learned historian of our country, that "the Latin language and the classical writers were preserved by the Christian clergy from that destruction which has entirely swept from us the language and the writings of Phœnicia, Carthage, Babylon, and Egypt."* We must also recollect that the influence of the Latin language became far more permanent when the great master-works of antiquity were gradually unburied from their concealments. In this resurrection of taste and genius, they derived their immortality from the imperishable soul of their composition. All Europe was condemned to be copiers, or in despair to be plagiarists.

It is well known how the admirable literatures of Greece and Rome struck a fresh impulse into literary pursuits at that period which has been distinguished as the restoration of letters. The emigration of the fugitive Greeks conveyed the lost treasures of their more ancient literature to the friendly shores of Italy. Italy had then to learn a new language, and to borrow inspiration from another genius.

The occupation of disinterring manuscripts which had long been buried in dungeon-darkness was carried on with an enthusiasm of which perhaps it would be difficult for us, at this day, to form an adequate conception. Many exhausted their fortunes in remote journeys, or in importations from the East; and the possession of a manuscript was considered not to have been too dearly purchased by the transfer of an estate,

* Turner's "History of England."

since only for the loan of one the pledge was nothing less.* The discovery of an author, perhaps heard of for the first time, was tantamount to the acquisition of a province; and, when a complete copy of "Quintilian" was discovered, the news circulated throughout Europe. The rapture of collation, the restoration of a corrupt text, or the perpetual commentary, became the ambition of a life, even after the era of printing.

This was the useful age of critical erudition. It furnished the studious with honors and avocations; but they were reserved only for themselves: it withdrew them from the cultivation of all vernacular literature. They courted not the popular voice when a professorial chair or a dignified secretaryship offered the only profit or honor the literary man contemplated. Accustomed to the finished compositions of the ancients, the scholar turned away from the rudeness of the maternal language. There was no other public opinion than what was gathered from the writings of the few who wrote to the few who read. They transcribed as sacred what authority had long established. Their arguments were scholastic and metaphysical; for they held little other communication with the world, or among themselves, but through the restricted medium of their writings. This state was a heritage of ideas and of opinions, transmitted from age to age with little addition or diminution. Authority and quotation closed all argument, and filled vast volumes. University responded to university, and men of genius were following each other in the sheep-tracks of antiquity. Even to so late a period as the days of Erasmus, every Latin word was culled with a classical superstition, and a week of agony was exhausted on a page finely inlaid with a mosaic of phrases.† While this verbal generation flourished, some eminent scho-

* See "Curiosities of Literature," article Recovery of Manuscripts.

† Erasmus composed a satirical dialogue between two vindictive Ciceronians. It is said that a duel has been occasioned by the intrepidity of maintaining the purity of a writer's Latinity. The pedantry of mixing

lars were but ridiculous apes of Cicero, and, in a cento of verses, empty echoes of Virgil. All native vigor died away in the coldness of imitation; and a similarity of thinking and of style deprived the writers of that raciness which the nations of Europe subsequently displayed when they cultivated their vernacular literature.

It is remarkable of those writers who had already distinguished themselves by their Latin works, that, when they began to compose in their native language, those classical effusions, on which they had confidently rested their future celebrity, sank into oblivion; and the writers themselves ceased to be subjects either of critical inquiry or of popular curiosity, except in that language in which they had opened a vein of original thought, in a manner and diction the creation of their own feelings. Here their natural power and their freed faculties placed them at a secure interval from their imitators. Modern writers in Latin were doomed to find too many academical equals; but those who were inimitable in their vernacular idiom could dread no rival, and discovered how the productions of the heart, rather than those of the lexicon, were echoed to their authors in the voice of their contemporaries.

The people indeed were removed far out of the influence of literature. The people could neither become intelligent with the knowledge, nor sympathize with the emotions, concealed in an idiom which had long ceased to be spoken, and which exacted all the labor and the leisure of the cloistered student.

This state of affairs had not occurred among the Greeks, and hardly among the Romans, who had only composed their immortal works in their maternal tongue: their arts, their sciences, and their literature were to be acquired by the single

Greek and Latin terms in the vernacular language is ridiculed by RABELAIS in his encounter with the Limousin student, whom he terrified till the youngster ended in delivering himself in plain French, and left off "Pindarizing" all the rest of his days. — *Pantagruel*, lib. ii. c. 6.

language which they used. It was the infelicity of their successors in dominion to weary out the tenderness of youth in the repulsive labors of acquiring the languages of the two great nations whose empire had for ever closed, but whose finer genius had triumphed over their conquerors.

With the ancients, instruction did not commence until their seventh year; and, till they had reached that period, Nature was not disturbed in her mysterious workings: the virgin intellect was not doomed to suffer the violence of our first barren studies,—that torture of learning a language which has ceased to be spoken by the medium of another equally unknown. Perhaps it was owing to this favorable circumstance, that, among the inferior classes of society in the two ancient nations, their numerous slaves displayed such an aptitude for literature, eminent as skilful scribes, and even as original writers.

One of the earliest prose-writers in our language, when style was beginning to be cultivated, has aptly described, by a domestic but ingenious image, the effect of our youth gathering the burdens of grammatical fagots in the Sylva of antiquity. It is Sir Thomas Elyot who speaks, in "the Boke of the Governor," printed in 1531: "By that time the learner cometh to the most sweet and pleasant rendering of old authors, the sparks of fervent desire are extinct with the burthen of grammar, like as a little fire is even quenched with a great heap of small sticks, so that it can never come to the principal logs, where it should burn in a great pleasant fire."

It was Italy, the Mother and the Nurse of Literature (as the filial zeal of her sons has hailed her), which first opened to the nations of Europe the possibility of each creating a vernacular literature, reflecting the image, not of the Greeks and of the Romans, but of themselves.

Three memorable men, of the finest and most contrasted genius, appeared in one country and at one period. With that contempt for the language of the people in which the learned participated, busied as they were at the restoration of letters

by their new studies and their progressive discoveries, PETRARCH contemned his own Italian "Rime," and was even insensible to the inspiration of a mightier genius than his own, — that genius who, with a parental affection, had adopted the orphan idiom of his fatherland, — an orphan idiom which had not yet found even a name; for it was then uncertain what was the true language of Italy. DANTE had at first proposed to write in Latin; but, with all his adoration of his master Virgil, he rejected the verse of Virgil, and anticipated the wants of future ages. A peculiar difficulty, however, occurred to the first former of the vernacular literature of Italy. In the state of this unsettled language, composed of fragments of the Latinity of a former populace, with the corruptions and novelties introduced by its new masters, deformed by a great variety of dialects, submitted in the mouths of the people to their caprices, and unstamped by the hand of a master, it seemed hopeless to fix on any idiom, which, by its inherent nobleness, should claim the distinguished honor of being deemed Italian. DANTE denied this envied grace to any of the rival principali ties of his country. The poet, however, mysteriously asserted, that the true Italian *volgare* might be discovered in every Italian city; but, being common to all, it could not be appropriated by any single one. Dante dignified the *volgare illustre*, which he had conceived in his mind, by magnificent titles: it was "illustrious;" it was "cardinal;" it was "aulic;" it was "courtly;" it was the language of the most learned who had composed in the vulgar idiom, whether in Sicily, in Tuscany, in Puglia, even in Lombardy, or in the marshes of Ancona! This fanciful description of the Italian language appeared enigmatical to the methodical investigations of the cold and cautious TIRABOSCHI. That grave critic submitted the interior feeling of the poet to the test of facts and dates. With more erudition than taste, he marked the mechanical gradations, the stages of every language, from rudeness to refinement. The mere historical investigator could conceive

no other style than what his chronology had furnished; but the spirit of DANTE had penetrated beyond the palpable substances of the explorer of facts and the arranger of dates. DANTE, in his musings, had thrown a mystical veil over the Italian language; but the poet presciently contemplated, amid the distraction of so many dialects, that an Italian style would arise, which, at some distant day, would be deemed classical. DANTE wrote, and DANTE was the classic of his country.

The third great master of the vernacular literature of Italy was BOCCACCIO, who threw out the fertility of his genius in the *volgare* of Nature herself. This Shakspeare of a hundred tales transformed himself into all the conditions of society: he touched all the passions of human beings, and penetrated into the thoughts of men ere he delineated their manners. Even two learned Greeks acknowledged that the tale-teller of Certaldo, in his variegated pages, had displayed such force and diversity in his genius, that no Greek writer could be compared with his *volgare eloquenza.*

The Italian literature thus burst into birth and into maturity; while it is remarkable of the other languages of Europe, that, after their first efforts, they fell into decrepitude. Our Saxon rudeness seems to have required more hewing and polishing to be modelled into elegance, and more volubility to flow into harmony, than even the genius of its earliest writers could afford. Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio were the contemporaries of Gower, of Chaucer, and of "the Ploughman;" they delight their nation after the lapse of many centuries: while the critics of the reign of Elizabeth complained that Piers Ploughman, Chaucer, and Gower then required glossaries; and so, at a later period, did Ronsard, Baif, and Marot, in France. In prose, we had no single author till the close of the sixteenth century who had yet constructed a style; and, in France, Rabelais and Montaigne had contracted the rust and the rudeness of antiquity, as it seemed to the refinement of the following generation.

It cannot be thougnt that the genius of the Italians always excelled that of other countries; but the material which those artists handled yielded more kindly to their touch. The shell they struck gave a more melodious sound than the rough and scrannel pipe cut from the Northern forests.

Custom and prejudice, however, predominated over the feelings of the learned even in Italy. Their epistolary correspondence was still carried on in Latin, and their first dramas were in the language of ancient Rome. ANGELO POLITIAN appears to have been the earliest who composed a dramatic piece, his "Orfeo," in *stilo volgare;* and for which he assigns a reason which might have occurred to many of his predecessors, — *perchè degli spettatori fusse meglio intesa,* — that he might be better understood by the audience!

The vernacular idiom in Italy was still so little in repute, while the prejudice in favor of the Latin was so firmly rooted, that their youths were prohibited from reading Italian books. A curious anecdote of the times which its author has sent down to us, however, shows that their native productions operated with a secret charm on their sympathies; for VARCHI has told the singular circumstance, that his father once sent him to prison, where he was kept on bread and water, as a penance for his inveterate passion for reading works in the vernacular tongue.

The struggle for the establishment of a vernacular literature was apparent about the same period in different countries of Europe, — a simultaneous movement to vindicate the honor and to display the merits of their national idiom.

JOACHIM DE BELLAY, of an illustrious literary family, resided three years with his relative the cardinal at Rome. The glory of the great vernacular authors of Italy inflamed his ardor; and, in one of his poems, he develops the beauty of "composing in our native language" by the deeper emotions it excites in our countrymen. Subsequently he published his "Defense et Illustration de la Langue Françoise," in 1549,

where eloquently and learnedly he would persuade his nation to write in their own language. FERREIRA, the Portuguese poet, about the same time, with all the feelings of patriotism, resolved to give birth to a national literature; exhorting his countrymen to cultivate their vernacular idiom, which he purified and enriched. He has thus feelingly expressed this glorious sentiment: —

> "Eu desta gloria so' fico contente
> Que a minha terra amei, e a minha gente."

In Scotland, we find Sir DAVID LYNDSAY, in 1553, writing his great work on "the Monarchie," in his vernacular idiom; although he thought it necessary to apologize, by alleging the example of Moses, Aristotle, Plato, Virgil, and Cicero, who had all composed their works in their own language.

In our own country, Lord BERNERS had anticipated this general movement. In 1525, when he ventured on the toil of his voluminous and spirited "Froissart," he described it as "translated out of Frenshe into our *maternal English tongue;*" an expression which indicates those filial yearnings of literary patriotism which were now to give us a native literature.

The predominant prejudice of writing in Latin was first checked in Germany, France, and England by the leaders of that great Revolution which opposed the dynasty of the tiara. It was one of the great results of the Reformation, that it taught the learned to address the people. The versions of the Scriptures seemed to consecrate the vernacular idiom of every nation in Europe. Peter Waldo began to use the vernacular language in his version, however coarse, of the Bible for the Vaudois, those earliest reformers of the Church; and, though the volume was suppressed and prohibited, a modern French literary historian deduces the taste for writing in the maternal tongue to this rude but great attempt to attract the attention of the people. The same incident occurred in our own annals; and it was the English Bible of

Edward the Sixth which opened the sealed treasures of our native language to the multitude. Calvin wrote his great work, "The Institute of the Christian Religion," at the same time in the Latin language and in the French; and thus it happens that both these works are alike original. Calvin deemed, that, to render the people intelligent, their instructor should be intelligible; and that, if books are written for a great purpose, they are only excellent in the degree that they are multiplied. Calvin addressed, not a few erudite recluses, but a whole nation.

It is unquestionable that the Reformation began to diminish the veneration for the Latin language. Whether from the love of novelty, or rather by that transition to a new system of human affairs, the pedantry of ancient standing was giving way to the cultivation of a national tongue. A great revolution was fast approaching, which would give a new direction to the studies of the scholastic gentry, and introduce a new mode of addressing the people. It was a revolution alarming those who would have walled in public opinion by circumscribing all knowledge to a privileged class. A remarkable evidence of this disposition appears in an incident which occurred to Sir Thomas Wilson, the author of two English treatises on the arts of Logic and of Rhetoric. An emigrant in the days of the Papistic Mary, he was arraigned at Rome before the Inquisition, on the general charge of heresy, but especially for having written his "Arts of Logic" and "of Rhetoric" in a language which, at least we may presume, the whole conclave could not have criticised. The torture was not only shown to him, but he tells us that "he had felt some smart of it." The dark inquisitors taught our critic a new canon in his own favorite arts; and our English Aristarchus soon discovered how far those perfidious arts of reasoning and of eloquence may betray the hapless orator, when his words are listened to by malicious judges equally skilled in mutilating sentences or catching at loose words. "They

brought down my great heart by telling me plainly that my *defence* had put me into further peril." Our baffled rhetorician saw that his only safety was to abstain from using the great instrument of his art, which was now locked up in silence. He was left, as he expresses himself, "without all help and without all hope, not only of liberty, but also of life." He escaped by a strange incident. It would seem, that, in an insurrection of the populace, they set fire to the prison, and in a burst of popular freedom, forgetful of their bigotry, or from the spirit of vengeance on their hateful masters, they suffered the heretics to creep out of their cells, — an ebullition of public spirit in "the worthy Romans," which the luckless English expounder of logic and rhetoric might well account as "an enterprise never before attempted." On Wilson's return to England, he was solicited to revise his admirable "Art of Rhetoric;" but he strenuously refused to "meddle with it, either hot or cold." Still smarting from the torture which his innocent progeny had occasioned, he seems to have alleviated his martyrdom with the quaint humor of a querulous prologue.

In these awful transitions from one state of society to another, even the most sagacious are predisposed to discover what they secretly wish. Erasmus foresaw that a great change was approaching; but, although he has delivered a prediction, it seems doubtful whether he had discerned the object aright. "I see," he writes, "a certain golden age ready to arise, which perhaps will not be my lot to partake of; yet I congratulate the world, and the younger sort I congratulate, in whose minds, however, Erasmus shall live and remain, by the remembrance of good offices he hath done." These "good offices" were restricted to his ardent labors in classical literature; but did Erasmus foresee in the change the subversion of the papal system by which Luther had often terrified the timid quietness of our gentle recluse, or the rise of the vernacular literature which had yet no exist-

ence? Erasmus, indeed, was so little sensible of this approaching change, that his amusing "Colloquies," and his "Panegyric on Folly," whose satirical humor had been so happily adapted to open the minds of men, he confined to the lettered circles; as Sir Thomas More did his "Utopia," which, had it been intelligible to the people, might have impressed them with some principles of political government. The sage of Rotterdam imagined that the great movement of the age was to restore the classical pursuits of antiquity, and never dreamed of that, which, in opposition to the ancient, soon obtained the distinction of "the New Learning," as it is expressed by Roger Ascham, — the knowledge which was adapted to the wants and condition of the people. Erasmus would have been startled at the truth, that the language of antiquity would even be neglected by the generality of writers; that every European nation would have classics of their own; and that the finest geniuses would make their appeals to the people in the language of the people.

The predilection for composing in the Roman language long continued among the most illustrious writers both at home and abroad. A judicious critic in the reign of James I., Edmund Bolton, in his "Nero Cæsar," recommends that the history of England should be composed in Latin by the classical pen of the learned Sir Henry Saville, the editor of "Chrysostom." It is indeed a curious circumstance, that, when an English play was performed at the University of Cambridge before Queen Elizabeth, the vice-chancellor was called on to remonstrate with the ministers of Elizabeth against such a derogation of the learning and the dignity of the university. This very vice-chancellor, who had to protest against all English comedies, had, however, himself been the writer of "Gammer Gurton's Needle," which was long considered to be the first attempt at English comedy.* This

* Collier's "History of Dramatic Poetry," ii. 463.

conduct of the university offered no encouragement to men of learning and genius to compose in their vernacular idiom.

The genius of VERULAM, whose prescient views often anticipated the institutions and the discoveries of succeeding times, appears never to have contemplated the future miracles of his maternal tongue. Lord BACON did not foresee that the English language would one day be capable of embalming all that philosophy can discover or poetry can invent; that his country, at length, would possess a national literature, and exult in models of its own. So little did Lord Bacon esteem the language of his country, that his favorite works are composed in Latin; and what he had written in English he was anxious to have preserved, as he expresses himself, in "that universal language which may last as long as books last." It might have surprised Lord Bacon to have been told, that the learned in Europe would one day study English authors to learn to think and write, and prefer his own "Essays," in their living pith, to the colder transfusions of the Latin versions of his friends. The taste of the philosophical chancellor was probably inferior to his invention. Our illustrious CAMDEN partook largely of this reigning fatuity when he wrote the reign of Elizabeth, — the history of his contemporaries, and the "Britannia," — the history of our country, in the Latin language; as did BUCHANAN that of Scotland, and DE THOU his great history, which includes that of the Reformation in France. All these works, addressed to the deepest sympathies of the people, were not imparted to them.

There was a peculiar absurdity in composing modern history in the ancient language of a people alike foreigners to the feelings as well as to the nature of the transactions. The Latin had neither proper terms to describe modern customs, nor fitting appellatives for titles and for names and places. The fastidious delicacy of the writers of modern Latinity could not endure to vitiate their classical purity by the Gothic names

of their heroes, and of the barbarous localities where memorable transactions had occurred. These great authors, in their despair, actually preferred to shed an obscurity over their whole history, rather than to disturb the collocation of their numerous diction. Buchanan and De Thou, by a ludicrous play on words, translated the proper names of persons and of places. A Scottish worthy, *Wiseheart*, was dignified by Buchanan with a Greek denomination, *Sophocardus:* so that, in a history of Scotland, the name of a conspicuous hero does not appear, or must be sought for in a Greek lexicon, which, after all, may require a punster for a reader. The history of De Thou is thus frequently unintelligible; and two separate indexes of names and places, and the public stations which his personages held, do not always agree with the copy preserved in the family. The names of the persons are Latinized according to their etymology, and all public offices are designated by those Roman ones which bore some fancied affinity. But the modern office was ill indicated by the ancient. The constable of France, a military charge, differed from the *magister equitum*, and the marshals of France from the *tribunus equitum*. His equivocal personages are not always recognized in this travesty of their Roman masquerade.

A remarkable instance of the gross impropriety of composing an English history in Latin, and of the obstinate prejudice of the learned, who imagined that the ancient idiom conferred dignity on a theme wholly vernacular, appeared when the delegates of Oxford purchased ANTHONY WOOD'S elaborate work on "the History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford." Our honest antiquary, with a true vernacular feeling, had written the history of an English university, during an uninterrupted labor of ten years, in his artless but natural idiom. The learned delegates opined that it was humiliating the Oxford press to have its history pass through it in the language of the country; and Dr. Fell, with others, was chosen to dignify it into Latin. What was the result of this pompous and

inane labor? The author was sorely hurt at the sight of his fair offspring disguised in its foreign and fantastic dress. What was clear in English, was obscure in the circumlocution of rotund periods and affected phraseologies. The circumstantial narrative and the local descriptions, so interesting to an English reader, were not only superfluous, but repulsive to the foreigner. ANTHONY WOOD indignantly retranscribed the whole of his English copy, and left the fair volumes to the care of the university itself; not without the hope, which has been realized, that his work should be delivered to posterity stamped by its author's native genius.*

Such was the crisis, and such the difficulties and the obstructions, of that native literature in whose prosperous state every European people now exults. Homogeneous with their habitual associations, moulded by their customs and manners, and everywhere stamped by the peculiar organization of each distinct race, we see the vernacular literature ever imbued with the qualities of the soil whence it springs, diversified, yet ever true to nature. Had the native genius of the great luminaries of literature not found a vein which could reach to the humblest of their compatriots, they who are now the creators of our vernacular literature had remained but pompous plagiarists or frigid babblers, and the moderns might still have been pacing in the trammels of a mimetic antiquity.

* We now possess this valued literary history, which none, perhaps, but Anthony à Wood could have so fervently pursued, — "the History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford," in five volumes quarto. Edited by John Gutch. It is a distinct work from the far-known "Athenæ Oxonienses." Why did this great work, as well as some others, come forth with a Latin title? This absurdity was a remaining taint of the ancient prejudice. But an English work was not the more classical for bearing a Latin title.

ORIGIN OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

JOHNSON pronounced it impossible to ascertain when our speech ceased to be Saxon, and began to be English; and although, since his day, English philology has extended its boundaries, the lines of demarcation are very movable for the literary antiquary. At whatever point we set out, we may find that something which preceded has been omitted. A century may pass away, and leave no precise epoch; and transitions of words and styles, like shades melting into each other, may elude perception. Too often wanting sufficient data, the toil of the antiquary becomes baffled, and the microscopic eye of the philologist pores on empty space. The learned have their theories; but in darkness we are doomed to grope, and in a circle we can fix on no beginning.

The elegant researches of Ellis, the antiquarian lore of Ritson, the simplicity of taste of Percy, the poetic fervor of Campbell, the elaborate diligence of Sharon Turner, and more recent names skilled in Saxon lore, have given opposite hypotheses, conjectures, and refutations. "A modification of language is not in reality a change," observes a powerful researcher in literary history,* who is at a loss "whether some compositions shall pass for the latest offspring of the mother, or the earliest fruit of the daughter's fertility," — a shrewd suspicion which the genealogists of words may entertain concerning the legitimate and the illegitimate, or the pure and the corrupt.

* Mr. Hallam.

The Saxon language had been tainted by some Latin terms from the ecclesiastics, and some fashionable Normanisms from the court of the Confessor; when the Norman-French, fatal as the arrow which pierced Harold, by a single blow struck down that venerable form, and never has it arisen. And now, with all its pomp, such as it was, it lies entombed and coffined in some scanty manuscripts.

We indeed triumph, that the language of our forefathers never did depart from the land, since it survived among the people. What survived? It soon ceased to be a written tongue; for no one cared to cultivate an idiom no longer required, and utterly contemned. After the Conquest, the miserable Saxons lost their "book-craft." We find nothing written but the continuation of a meagre chronicle. A few pietists still lingered in occasional homilies, and a solitary charter has been perpetuated; but the style was already changed, and, as a literary language, the Anglo-Saxon had for ever departed. It had sunk to the people, and they treated the ancient idiom after their fashion. The language of books served not simple men: laying aside its inflections and its inversions and its arbitrary construction, they chose a shorter and more direct conveyance of their thoughts, and only kept to a language fitted to the business of daily life. This getting free from the encumbrances of the Anglo-Saxon we may consider formed the obscure beginnings of THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. All the gradual changes or the sudden innovations through more than two centuries may not be perceivable by posterity: but philologists have marked out how first the inversion was simplified, and then the inflections dropped; how the final *e* became mute, and at length was ejected; how ancient words were changed, and Norman neologisms introduced. As this English cleared itself of the nebulosity, the anomalies, and all the complex machinery, of the mother idiom, a natural style was formed, very homely; for this vaunted Saxon now came from the mouths of the people, and

from those friends of the people, the monks, who only wrote for their humble brother-Saxons. The English writers, who were composing in French, and the more learned, who displayed their clerkship by their Latinity, had a standard of literature which would regulate or advance their literary workmanship; but there was no standard in the language of bondage: it had mixed, as Ritson oddly describes it, "with one knows not what," a disorganization of words and idioms Numerous DIALECTS pervaded the land. The East and the West agreed as ill together as both did with the North and the South; and they who wrote for the people, each chose the dialect of their own shire.

The "Saxon Chronicle," which closes with the year 1155, had been continued at progressive intervals by different writers. This authentic document of the Anglo-Saxon diction exhibits remarkable variations of style; and a critical Saxonist has detected the corruptions of its idiom, its inflections, and its orthography; in a word, that, through successive periods, it had suffered a material alteration in its character.*

Somewhat more than a century after the Norman invasion, about 1180, Layamon made an English version of Wace's "Brut," — that French metrical chronicle which the Anglo-Norman had drawn from the Latin history of Geoffry of Monmouth. Here we detect an entire changeableness of style, or rather a transformation; but what to call it, the most skilful have not agreed. George Ellis drew a copious specimen of a writer unnoticed by Warton; but, confounded by "its strange orthography," and mournfully doubtful of his own meritorious glossary, he considered the style, "though simple and unmixed, yet a very barbarous Saxon." A recent critic opines that Layamon "seems to have halted between two languages, — the written and the spoken." Mr. Campbell imagines it "the dawn" of our language, while some Saxonists

* Dr. Bosworth.

have branded it as semi-Saxon. It seems a language thrown into confusion, struggling to adapt itself to a new state of things: it has no Norman-French, it is saturated with Saxon, but the sentences are freed from inversions.*

About the same period as Layamon's version of Wace, we have a very original attempt of a writer, in those days of capricious pronunciation, to convey to the reader the orthoepy by regulating the orthography. As it is only recently that we have obtained any correct notion of a writing which has suffered many misconceptions from our earlier English scholars, the history of this work becomes a bibliographical curiosity.

An ecclesiastic paraphrased the Gospel-histories. He was a critical writer, projecting a system to which he strictly adhered, warning his transcribers as punctually to observe, otherwise "they would not write the word right:" they were therefore "to write those letters twice which he had written so." The system consisted in doubling the consonant after a short vowel to regulate the pronunciation. He wrote broth*err* and aff*terr;* is, *iss;* and it, *itt.*†

It is evident that this critical was also a refined writer; for it indicated some delicacy, when we find him apologizing for certain additions in his version, which was metrical, not found in the original, and merely used by him for the convenience of

* Of this recondite writer, Ellis has said, "Probably Layamon never will be printed;" but we live in an age of publication, and Layamon is said to be actually in the press. [Since this was written, the work has been published at the cost of the Society of Antiquaries, under the editorial care of Sir Frederick Madden.]

† Dr. Bosworth or Mr. Thorpe has explained this attempt more fully. "From this idea of doubling the consonant after a short vowel, as in German, we are enabled to form some tolerably accurate notions as to the pronunciation of our forefathers. Thus Orm (or Ormin) writes *min* and *win* with a single *n* only, and *lif* with a single *f*, because the *i* is long, as in *mine*, *wine*, and *life*. On the other hand, wherever the consonant is doubled, the vowel preceding is sharp and short, as *winn* pronounced *win*, not *wine*." — "Origin of the Germanic and Scandinavian Languages," 24.

filling up his metre. The first literary historians to whose lot it fell to record this anomalous work, among whom were HICKES and WANLEY, judging by appearances, in the superabundance of the rugged consonants, deemed this refined Anglo-Saxon's writing as the work of an ignorant scribe, or as a rude provincial dialect, or harsh enough to be the work of an English Dane. Its metrical form eluded all detection, as the verses were a peculiar metre of fifteen syllables, all jumbled together as prose: as such they gave some extracts; but it is evident that this was done with little intelligence of their author. TYRWHIT, occupied on his "Chaucer," had a more percipient ear for these Anglo-Saxon metres, and discovered that this prose was strictly metrical; but he surely advanced no farther: he did not discover the writer's design, that "the Ennglisshe writ" was for "Ennglisshe menn to lare," — to learn. Indeed, Tyrwhit, who complains that Hickes, in noticing this peculiarity of spelling, "has not explained the author's reason for it," himself so little comprehended the system of the double consonants, that in his extract, humorously "begging pardon" of this old and odd reformer, whom the critic was not only offending, but massacring, "for not following his injunctions," he discards "all the superfluous letters," — not aware that it was the intention of the writer to preserve the orthoepy. Even our Anglo-Saxon historian missed the secret; for he has remarked on the words, that they were "needlessly loaded with double consonants." Yet he was not wholly insensible to the substantial qualities of the writer; for he discovered in the diction, that "the order of words is uniformly more natural, the inflections are more unfrequent, and the phrases of our English begin to emerge." And, finally, our latest authority decides, that this work, so long misinterpreted, is "the oldest, the purest, and by far the most valuable specimen of our old English dialect that time has left us." *

* Guest's "Hist. of English Rhythms," ii. 186.

What is "old English" is the question. The title of this work may have perplexed the first discoverers as much as the double consonants. The writer was an ecclesiastic of the name of ORM; and he was so fascinated with his own work, for the purity of its diction, and the precision of its modulated sounds, that, in a literary rapture, he baptized it with reference to himself; and *Orm* fondly called his work the "Ormulum." One hardly expected to meet with such a Narcissus of literature in an old Anglo-Saxon philologist of the year so far gone by; yet we now find that Orm might fairly exult in his "Ormulum."

Nearly a century after Layamon, in the same part of England, the monk, ROBERT OF GLOUCESTER, wrote his "Chronicle," about 1280. This honest monk painfully indited for his brother-Saxons the whole history of England, in the shape of Alexandrine verse in rhyme: the diction of the verse approaches so nearly to prose, that it must have been the colloquial idiom of the west. The "Ingliss," as it was called in the course of the century between Layamon and Robert of Gloucester, betrays a striking change; and modern philologists have given the progressive term of "middle English" to the language from this period to the Reformation.* Our chronicler has fared ill with posterity, of whom, probably, he never dreamt. Robert of Gloucester, who is entirely divested of a poetical character, as are all rhyming chroniclers, has had the hard hap of being criticised by two merciless poets; and, to render his uncouthness still more repulsive, the black-letter fanaticism of his editor has vauntingly arrayed the monk, whom he venerated, in the sable Gothic, bristling with the

* During the thirteenth century, the organic change proceeded so rapidly, that there is quite as wide a difference between the language of Layamon and that which was written at the beginning of the fourteenth century (about the time of Robert of Gloucester), as there is between the English language of the reign of Edward the Second and the tongue of the present day. — See Mr. Wright's learned "Essay on the Literature of the Anglo-Saxons," 107.

Saxon characters.* It has, therefore, required something like a physical courage to sit down to Robert of Gloucester. Yet, in the rhymer whom Warton has degraded, Ellis has discovered a metrical annalist whose orations are almost eloquent, whose characters of monarchs are energetic; and what he records of his own age, matter worthy of minute history.

Another monk, ROBERT MANNYNG, of Brunne, or Bourne, in Lincolnshire, who had versified PIERS LANGTOFT'S "Chronicle," has left a translation of the "Manuel des Péchés," ascribed to Bishop Grosteste, who composed it in politer French. In this "Manual of Sins," or, as he terms it, "A Handlyng of Sinne," according to monkish morality and the monkish devices to terrify sinners, our recreative monk has introduced short tales, some grave and some he deemed facetious, which convey an idea of domestic life and domestic language. It is not without curiosity that we examine these, the earliest attempts at that difficult trifle, — the art of telling

* Hearne, in his preface, exclaims in ecstasy, "This is the *first book* ever printed in this kingdom, it may be in *the whole world, in the black-letter*, with a mixture of *the Saxon characters*, which is the very garb that was in vogue in the author's time; that is, in the thirteenth century." Hearne often claims our gratitude, while his earnest simplicity will extort a smile. On our ancient Bibles he could not refrain from exclaiming, "Though I have taken so much pleasure in perusing the English Bible of the year 1541, yet 'tis nothing equal to that I should take in turning over that of the year 1539." His antiquarianism kindled his piety over Cranmer's Bible.

Thomas was haunted by a chimera, that whatever was obsolete deserved to be revived. This honest spirit of antiquarianism, working on a most undiscerning intellect, seems to have kindled into a literary bigotry in his sateless delight of "the black-letter of our grandfathers' days." Hearne set this unhappy example of printing ancient writers with all their obsolete repulsiveness in orthography and type. He was closely followed by RITSON, and by WHITAKER in his edition of "Piers Ploughman;" and these editors assuredly have scared away many a neophyte in our vernacular literature. RITSON printed his "Ancient Songs" with the Saxon characters and abbreviations, which render them often unintelligible. This literary antiquary lived to regret this superstitious antiquarianism. He had prepared a new edition entirely cleared of these offences, but which unfortunately he destroyed at the morbid close of his life.

a short tale. Robert de Brunne is neither a Mat Prior nor a La Fontaine, but he is a block which might have been carved into one or the other; and he shows, that, without much art, a tale may be tolerably told.* His octosyllabic verse is more fluent than the protracted Alexandrine of his "Chronicle." The words fall together in natural order, and we seem to have advanced in this rude and artless "Ingliss." But the most certain evidence that "the English" was engaging the attention of those writers who professedly were devoting their pens to those whom they called "the commonalty," is, that they now began to criticise; and we find Robert de Brunne continually protesting against "strange Ingliss." This phrase has rather perplexed our inquirers. "Strange Ingliss" would seem to apply to certain novelties in diction used by the tale-reciters and harpers; for so our monk tells us: —

"I wrote
In symple speeche as I couthe,
That is *lightest in manne's mouthe.*
I mad (made) nought for no disoúrs (tale-tellers),
Ne for no seggers nor harpoúrs,
Bot for the luf (love) of symple menn
That *strange Inglis* cann not ken."

It was about this time that the metrical romances, translated from the French, spread in great number, and introduced many exotic phrases. In the celebrated romance of "Alisaundre" we find French expressions, unalloyed by any attempt at Anglicizing them, overflowing the page. The phrase is, however, once applied to certain strange metres which our monk avoided; for many "that read English would be confounded by them."

Whatever Robert de Brunne might allude to by his "strange

* Turner's "History of England," v. 217, will furnish the curious reader readily with several of these specimens of the modes of thinking and of acting of the middle ages, when monks only were the preceptors of mankind.

Ingliss,"* the same cry and the identical expressions are repeated by a writer not many years afterwards, — RICHARD ROLLE, called "the Hermit of Hampole." He produced the earliest versions of the Psalms into English prose, with a commentary on each verse; and a voluminous poem in ten thousand lines, entitled "the Prikke of Conscience," translated from the Latin for "the unletterd men of Engelonde who can only understand English." In the prologue to this first Psalter in English prose, he says, "I seke no *straunge Ynglyss*, bot *lightest* and *communest*, and wilk (such) that is most like unto the Latyn: and thos I fine (I find) no proper Inglis, I felough (follow) the wit of the words; so that thai that knowes noght (not) the Latyne, be (by) the Ynglys may come to many Latyne wordys." Here we arrive at open corruption! Already a writer appears refined enough to complain of the poverty of the language in furnishing "proper Inglis" or synonymes for the Latin. The next step must follow; and that would be, in due time, the Latinizing "the Ynglys."

* This term of "strange Ingliss" has yet been found so obscure as to occasion some strictures, which, like the Interpreter in the Critic, are the most difficult to comprehend. I must refer to Monsieur Thierry's very delightful "History of the Conquest of England," ii. 271, for a very refined speculation on our Robert de Brunne's unlucky obscurity. Monsieur Thierry imagines that the "strange Ingliss" was the refined English which had flown into Scotland, and there become the cultivated language of the minstrels and the court, and which our hapless Saxons on *this side of the Tweed* had sunk into a dialect only fitted for serfs. This finer and more elevated English could not be understood by a base commonalty: this was "strange Ingliss" to them. A very interesting event in the history of both nations had transplanted the purer English to the Scottish court: Malcolm, whom the usurpation of Macbeth had driven from the Scottish throne, was expatriated in England during an interval of near twenty years. The affection of the monarch for the English was such, that he adopted their language; and, when the royal family of England was expelled by the Conqueror, the king received them and the emigrant Saxons, and married the English princess. This gave rise to that intercourse with the south of Scotland, of which the result in our literary, if not in our civil history, is remarkable. Certain it is that much broad Scotch is good old English, and the noblest minstrelsy cometh "fra the North Countrie."

A great curiosity of the genuine homeliness of our national idiom at this time has come down to us in a manuscript in the Arundel Collection, now in our national library. It is a volume written by a monk of St. Austin's at Canterbury, in the Kentish dialect, about a century and a half after Layamon, and half a century after Robert of Gloucester, in 1340. This honest monk, like others of the Saxon brotherhood, was writing for his humbled countrymen, or as he expresses him self, with a rude Doric simplicity, —

"Vor Vader and for Moder and for other Ken."

I throw into a note what I have transcribed of this specimen of the old Saxon-English, or, as it is called, "Semi-Saxon."* In this specimen of the language as spoken by the people, the barbarism is native, pure in its impurity, and unalloyed by any spurious exotic. This English spoken in the Weald of Kent, Caxton tells us, in his time, was "as broad and rude English as is spoken in any place in England." When contrasted with the diction of a Northern bard, whom

* On the leaf appears, in the handwriting of the author, "This Boc is Dan Michelis of Northgate ywrite an Englis of his ozene hand that hatte *Ayenbyte of inwyt*, and is of the boc-house of Seynt Austyn's of Cantorberi." The writer was seventy years of age; and he tells us that he was not —

"Blind, and dyaf, and alsuo dumb,
Of zeventy yer al not rond,
Ne ssette by draze to the grond,
Uor peny nor mark, ne nor pond."

At the end, the monk tells us for whom he writes: —

"Nou ich wille that ye ywite hou hitt is ywent
Thet this Boc is ywrite mid Engliss of Kent.
This Boc is ymade vor lewede men,
Vor Vader and vor Moder and vor other Ken,
Ham vor to berze uram alle manyere Zen
Thet ine have inwytte ne bleue no uoul wen.
Huo ase God is his name yzed
Thet this Boc made God him yeue that bread
Of Angles of Hauene and thereto his red,
And underuongè his Zoule, huanne that is dyad"

a singular accident retrieved for us,* it offers a curious picture of the English language, so different at precisely the same period. The minstrel's flow of verse almost anticipates the elegance of a writer of two centuries later.

The poems of LAURENCE MINOT consist of ten narrative ballads on some of the wars of Edward the Third in Scotland and in France. The events this bard records show that his writings were completed in 1352. His editor is surprised that "the great monarch whom he so eloquently and so earnestly panegyrized was either ignorant of his existence or insensible of his merit." Minot was probably nothing more than a Northern minstrel, whose celebrity did not extend many leagues. His verses convey to us a perfect conception of the minstrel character, throwing out his almost extemporaneous "Lays" on the predominant incidents of his day. All these narrative poems open by soliciting the attention of the auditors: —

"LITHES! and I sall tell you tyll
The bataile of Halidon Hyll."

And in another: —

"HERKINS how long King Edward lay,
With his men before Tournay."

The singularity of these "Lays" consists in coming down to us in a written form, evidently with great care and fondness, bearing their author's unknown name. They might

* While Tyrwhit was busied on the "Canterbury Tales," his attention was excited by the old cataloguer of the Cottonian manuscripts to a *Chaucer exemplar emendate scriptum.* On a spare leaf the name of Richard Chawfer had been scrawled, which might have been that of some former possessor. There are two fatalities which hang over the pen of a slumbering cataloguer, — ignorance and indolence. Our present one caught an immortal name, and never travelled onwards; and, struck by the fairness of the writing, inferred that it was a copy of Chaucer critically accurate. It turned out to be the compositions of an unknown poet, who not willingly relinquished his claim on posterity; for he has subscribed his name, LAURENCE MINOT. [The manuscript is marked Galba, E. IX.: specimens were first published from it by Tyrwhit and Warton, and the entire series ultimately by Ritson.]

have appropriately been preserved in Percy's "Reliques of English Poetry."*

Three centuries had now passed, and still the national genius languished in the Norman bondage of the language. But the commonalty were increasing in number and in weight, and an indignant sense of the destitution of a national language was not confined to the laity: it was attracting the attention of those who thought and who wrote. Richard of Bury, Bishop of Durham, who put forth the first bibliographical treatise by an Englishman, and may be ranked among the earliest critical collectors of a private library, in his celebrated treatise on the love of books, the "Philo-biblion,"† breathes all the enthusiasm of study; but, while he directs our attention to the classical writers of antiquity, he stimulates his contemporaries to emulate them by composing new books. Although he himself wrote in Latin, he regrets that no institution for children in the English language existed; and he complains that our English youth "first learned the French, and from the French the Latin." Our youth were sent into France to polish their nasal Norman. This writer flourished about 1330, and thus ascertains, that, in the beginning of the reign of Edward III., no English was taught. The "Polychronicon," a Latin chronicle compiled by the monk Higden, was finished somewhat later, — about 1365; and we find the complaint more bitterly renewed. "There is no nation," wrote this honest monk, "whose children are compelled to leave their own language, as we have since the Normans came into England. A gentleman's child must

* Ritson's first edition (1795) of Minot having become very difficult to procure, an elegant re-impression, and apparently a correct one, was published in 1825.

† "Philobiblion, sive de Amore Librorum et Institutione Bibliothecæ," ascribed to Richard of Bury, Bishop of Durham; but Fabricius says it was written by Robert Holcot, a learned friar, at his desire. — Fab.: *Bib. Med. Ævi*, vol. i. It is the bishop, however, who was the collector, and always speaks in his own person. It has been recently translated by Mr. Inglis.

speak French from the time that he is rocked in a cradle or plays with a child's breche."

The Latin Chronicle of Higden, twenty years later, was translated into English by John de Trevisa. On this passage the translator furnishes the important observation, that, since this was written, a revolution had occurred through our grammar-schools: the patriotic efforts of one Sir John Cornewaile, in teaching his pupils to construe their Latin into English, had been generally adopted; "so that now," proceeds Trevisa, "the yere of our Lorde 1385, in all the grammere scoles of Engelond, children leaveth Frensche, and construeth and lerneth in Englische." The innovation had startled our translator; for, like all innovations, there was loss as well as profit, when, quitting what we are accustomed to, we launch dubiously into a new acquisition. The disuse of the French would detriment their intercourse abroad, and, on great occasions, at home. This was a time when Trevisa himself, in selecting some scriptural inscriptions for the chapel of Berkley Castle, where he was chaplain, had them painted on boards in Norman-French and Latin, in alternate lines. They are still visible. English itself was yet too base for the service of God.

It was still a debatable question, as appears by the prefatory dialogue between Trevisa and his patron, Lord Berkley, whether any translation of the Chronicle were at all necessary, Latin being the general language. It was, however, a noble enterprise, being the first great effort in our vernacular prose. This mighty volume is a universal history, which, in its amplitude and miscellaneous character, seemed to contain all that men could know; and the version long enjoyed the favor of all readers as the first historical collection in the English language. It bears the seal of the monkish taste, being equally pious and fabulous. It not only opens before the days of Adam, but, like the creation, has its seven divisions: it has monsters, however, which are not found in Genesis.

The monk is doubtful whether they came of Adam or of Noah. They indeed came from the elder Pliny, to whose puerile wonders and hasty compilation we owe the foundation of our natural history.

It was about the period that Higden concluded his labors, that Sir John Mandeville deemed it wise, having written his Travels in Latin and French, to compose them also in the vernacular idiom; a strong indication of the rising disposition to cultivate the national tongue. The policy of our Government now accorded with the general disposition; and hence originated the noble decision of Edward III., in 1362, — to banish from our courts of law the Norman-French: but so awkward seemed this great novelty, that the statute is written in the very language it abolishes,* and indeed to which our great lawyers, the timid slaves of precedents, long afterwards clung in their barbarous law-French phrases mingled with their native English.

* Barrington on the Statutes.

In Blackstone's "Commentaries," book iii. chap. 21, we find much curious information, and some philosophical reflections. The use of the technical law-Latin is adroitly defended. Under Cromwell, the records were turned into English; at the Restoration, the practisers declared they could not express themselves so significantly in English, and they returned to their Latin. In 1730, a statute ordered that the proceedings at law should be done into English, that the common people might understand the process, &c. But, after many years' experience, the people are as ignorant in matters of law as before, and suffer the inconveniences of increasing *the expense of all legal proceedings* by being bound by the stamp-duties to write only a stated number of words in a sheet; *and the English language, through the multitude of its particles, is so much more verbose than the Latin, that the number of sheets is much augmented.* Two years subsequently, it was necessary to make a new act to allow all technical terms to continue Latin, which were too ridiculous to be translated; such as *nisi prius*, *fieri facias*, *habeas corpus*. This last act, in 1732, has defeated every beneficial purpose intended by the preceding statute of 1730.

One hardly expected to find philological acumen in the dry discussion of law-Latin; but when the *three* words, *secundum formam statuti*, require *seven* in English, "according to the form of the statute," one easily comprehends the heavy weight of the *stamp-duty* for *writing English*. The Saxons, who made no use of particles of speech, had more merit than we were aware of.

A mightier movement even than the royal decree in favor of fostering the national language was a translation of the Scriptures by the intrepid spirit of Wickliffe. This had been done with the pledge of his life; for that was often in peril while he thus struck the first impulse of that reformation which not only influenced his own age, but one more remote. The translation of Wickliffe was a new revelation of the word of God in the language of many. The streets were crowded with Lollards, as his followers were denominated, of which, like similar odious names attached to a rising party, the origin remains uncertain: Lollardy was, however, a convenient term to describe treason in the Church and the State. Wickliffe's translation of the Old Testament still lies in numerous manuscripts, for our cold neglect of which we have incurred the censure of the foreigner. The New Testament has happily been printed.*

If we place by the side of the text of Wickliffe our later versions, we may become familiar with that Saxon-English which our venerable Caxton subsequently considered was "more like to Dutch than English."

But the picturesque language of our emotions, the creative diction of poetry, appeared in the courtly style of Chaucer, who nobly designed to render the national language refined and varied, while his great contemporaries, the author of Piers Ploughman, lingered in a rude dialect, and Gower was still composing alternately in Latin and in French.

* By the Rev. JOHN LEWIS, 1731, fol.; and republished by the Rev. H. H. BABER, 1810, 4to.

The censure of Fabricius deserves our notice. After mention of Wickliffe's version of the Bible, he adds, "Mirum est Anglos eam (versionem) tam diu neglexisse quum vel linguæ causa ipsis in pretio esse debeat." — *Bib. Lat.*, v. 321.

It is provoking to be reminded of our neglected duties by a foreigner. We might assuredly be curious to learn how the sublimity and the colloquial and narrative parts of this vast treasure of our ancient language were produced under the primitive pen of Wickliffe. A fine copy of Wickliffe's Bible was in the library of Mr. Douce; and I have heard, with great satisfaction, that it will probably be edited by Sir Francis Madden.

The emancipation of the national language was subsequently confirmed by another monarch. A curious anecdote in our literary history has recently been disclosed of Henry V. To encourage the use of the vernacular tongue, this monarch, in a letter missive to one of the city companies, declared that "*the English tongue hath in modern days begun to be honorably enlarged and adorned; and, for the better understanding of the people*, the common idiom should be exercised in writing." This was at once setting aside the Norman-French and the Latin for the daily business of civil life. By this record, it appears that many of the craft of brewers, to whose company this letter was addressed, had "knowledge of writing and reading in the English idiom, but Latin and French they by no means understood." We further learn that now "the LORDS and the COMMONS BEGAN *to have their proceedings noted down in the mother-tongue;*" and this example was therefore to be followed by the city companies.*

At this advanced age of transition, so unsettled was the language of ordinary affairs, that the same document bears evidence of three different idioms. We find the petition of an Irish chieftain, a prisoner in the Tower, written in the French language, while the indorsed royal answer is in English, and the order of the council in Latin.† The bulletins of Henry V. to the mayor and aldermen of London are written in English, but indorsed in French.

As if they designed to hold out a model to their subjects, and to sanction the use of their native English, both this prince and his father Henry IV. left their wills in the national language,‡ at a time when the nobles employed Latin or French for such purposes.

There has often existed a sympathy between ourselves and

* Herbert's "History of the City Companies."

† I derive this curious fact from Mr. Tyler's "History of Henry of Monmouth," ii. 245.

‡ These wills are preserved in Mr. Nichols's "Collection of Royal Wills"

our near neighbors of France, when not disturbed by war. This great movement of establishing a national language, and freeing themselves from the Roman bondage, was tried at a later period by the French Government, who were nearly baffled in the attempt. An ordinance of Louis XII. was issued *to abolish the use of the Latin tongue;* but such was the prejudice in favor of the ancient language, that, notwithstanding that the Latin of the bar had degenerated into the most ludicrous barbarism, the lawyers were unwilling to yield to the popular wish. The use of Latin in France in all legal instruments lasted till the succeeding reign of Francis I., who, by two ordinances, declared that THE FRENCH LANGUAGE should be solely used in all public acts. It was, however, as late as forty years after, in 1629, that at length the public offices consented to draw their instruments in their vernacular language.* So long has general improvement to contend with the force of habit and the passion of prepossession; and such were the difficulties which the vernacular style of both these great empires had to overcome.

When the learned HICKES, in his patriotic fervor to trace the legitimacy of the English from its parent language, adjudged that "nine-tenths of our words were of Saxon origin," he exultingly appealed to the Lord's Prayer, wherein there are only three words of French or Latin extraction. This startled TYRWHIT, then busied on his Chaucerian glossary, and who, in that labor, had before him a different aspect of our mottled English. That was not the day when writers would maintain opinions against authority. Awed by the great Saxonist, the poetical antiquary compromised; alleging, that "though the *form* of our language was still Saxon, yet the *matter* was in a great measure French." His successor in English philology, GEORGE ELLIS, still further faltered and arbitrated; suggesting that the great Saxonist,

* Le Comte de Neufchateau, "Essay on French Literature," prefixed to the late edition of Pascal's Works.

to complete his favorite scheme, would trace some *old Gaulish* French to a *Teutonic* origin. In tracing the formation of the English language, we are sensible that the broad and solid foundations lie in the Saxon; but the superstructure has often, with a magical movement, varied in its architecture. An enamoured Saxonist has recently ventured to assert that "English is but another term for Saxon;" but an ocular demonstration has been exhibited in specimens of the *modern English* of our master-writers, marking by Italics all the words of Saxon derivation. By these it appears that the translators of the Bible have happily preserved for us the pristine simplicity of our Saxon-English; like the light in a cathedral, through its storied and saintly window, shedding its antique hues on hallowed objects. But, as we advance, we discover in our most eminent writers the Anglicisms diminish; and SHARON TURNER has observed that a fifth of the Saxon language has ceased to be used. A recent critic * has curiously calculated that the English language, now consisting of about thirty-eight thousand words, contains twenty-three thousand, or nearly five-eighths, Anglo-Saxon in their origin; that, in our most idiomatic writers, there is about one-tenth *not* Anglo-Saxon, and, in our least, about one-third.† A cry of our desertion of our Saxon purity has been raised by those who have not themselves practised it in their more elevated compositions; but are we to deem that English corrupted which recedes from its Saxon character, and compels the

* "Edinburgh Review," October, 1839.

† See "Quarterly Review," lix. 34. The critic is deeply imbued with his delight of Saxon-English. "The first bursts in our literature (probably the noblest are meant) are in almost pure Saxon." The critic particularly appeals to Milton for two instances; yet surely the Greekized, the Latinized, and even the Italianized Milton will not serve to assert the pre-eminence of our venerable dialect. "A country congregation" is its more certain test, where the language of the people is the only language required. Cobbett's writings throughout are Saxon-English. Coleridge considered Asgill and De Foe the most idiomatic writers.

daughter to lose the likeness of her mother? Are we to banish to perpetuity those foreigners who have already fructified our Saxon soil? In an age of extended literature, conversant with objects and productive of associations which never entered into the experience of our forefathers, the ancient language of the people must necessarily prove inadequate: a new language must start out of new conceptions. Look into our present "exchequer of words:" there lies many a refined coinage struck out of the arts and the philosophies of Europe. Every word which genius creates, and which time shall consecrate, is a possession of the language which must be inscribed into that variable doomsday-book of words, the English Dictionary. Devotees of Thor and Woden! the day of your idolatries has passed, and your remonstrances are vain as your superstitions.

VICISSITUDES OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

THE vicissitudes of the English language are more evident than its origin. In the history of a language, we are perpetually reminded, by the remonstrances of the critics, of the corruptions of its purity, the perils of innovation, and the obtrusion of neologisms; while we find these same critics fastidiously rejecting what they deem the antiquated and the obsolete. Many causes are constantly operating these changes of language. The style of one age ceases to be that of another; new modifications of thought create new modes of expression; and as knowledge enlarges its sphere, and society changes its manners, novel objects imperiously demand adequate terms.

Our language has been subjected to those dominant events in the history of our country which have so powerfully influenced our genius and our destiny; and, our insular position occasioning a general intercourse with all the Continental nations, our national idiom has been mottled by foreign neologisms.

For more than five centuries was the Saxon language the language of England. The awful revolution of 1066 produced novelties of all kinds, but none greater than the entire change in our Saxon language; which, however, our Norman masters could never eradicate from among the people. During three centuries, most of our English writers composed in French. When Greek was first studied, in the reign of Henry the Seventh, it planted many a Hellenism in our English:

the translation of the Scriptures in that of Edward the Sixth, while it transmitted many Latinisms, at the same time revived the simplicity of the Saxon-English, which seemed to bear a sort of evidence that a primitive language was most suitable for primitive Christianity in contrast with the pompous corruptions of Rome.

Under Elizabeth, favorite phrases were insinuated into the dialect by over-refined travellers, who spoke "minion-like;" while the revolution of the Netherlands incorporated among us many a rough but vigorous inmate. In the days of James and Charles, the long residence of the Spanish Gondomar at our court, and the romantic pilgrimage of love to Madrid, and the political ties which bound the two nations, framed the style of courtesy, as well as set the fashions.

The puritanic commonwealth under Cromwell sunk down the language to its basest uses. Stripped to nakedness, the jargon of the market and the shop hid itself under the gibberish of its cant. Writers then abounded equally illiterate and fanatical. Perhaps we owe to these mean scribblers the scorn and pride with which Milton constructed, on the Latin model of inversions and involutions of sentences, his artificial and learned prose, unlike the style of his contemporaries, and which was never to be that of his successors: it was a machinery too costly for its price, and too unwieldy for the handling of an ordinary workman. Under the second Charles, we see the nation and the language equally Gallicized; and so it remained to the days of Anne. Suppose, for a moment, that, when the first Georges were appointed to the English throne, the Germany of that day had been the Germany of the present: what would have been the result? Instead of two torpid Germans, destitute of every sensibility to literature and art, we might have seen an accomplished Duke of Weimar at St. James's, and a Wieland, a Schiller, and a Goethe, at our court: our authors had been impressed by the German genius, in our emulation and delight. Such

is the simple history of the English language as it has been, or might have been, subjected to our national events.

The history of the vernacular language of other European nations discovers the same mutability, though not always produced by those great public incidents which may have been peculiar to ourselves. In Spain, however, we find that the possession of that land by the Moors has left in the Castilian language a whole dictionary of Arabic words, which now mingle with the vernacular idiom, and for ever shall bear witness of the triumphs of their ancient masters. But, in the history of a vernacular language, it may also happen that the first writers, combining in a singleness of taste, may construct a particular style. The earliest writers of France had modelled their taste by the Greek: Jodelle, Ronsard, Du Bartas, and others, imbued with Attic literature, Greekized the French idiom by their compounds, their novel terms, and their sonorous periphrases. The court and the ladies were adopting this new style; and, as usual, the unskilful were diverging into the most ridiculous affectations. But it was possible that the French language might have acquired a concision and vigor of which it is now destitute; for those early writers threw out a more original force than their tame successors. The artificial delicacy of the French critics has condemned these attempts as barbarisms; but to have transplanted these Atticisms into the native soil partook more of boldness than of barbarism. The attempt failed, if it could ever have succeeded, by the civil wars, which soon drew off the minds of men from the placable innovators of language.

The French, though not an insular people, have been subject to rapid revolutions in their language. The ancient Gaulish-French has long been as unintelligible to a modern Frenchman as our Saxon is to us: even those numerous poets of France, who, at a later period, composed in their *langue Romane*, are strewed in the fields of their poesy only as carcasses, which no miracle of antiquarian lore shall ever

resuscitate. Compare the style of one writer with another only two centuries later, or Rabelais with Voltaire. The age of Louis XIV. effected the most rapid change in the vernacular style, insomuch that the diction of the writers of the preceding reign of Louis XIII. had fallen obsolete in the short space of half a century. And yet the chastened style of the age of Louis XIV., with its cold imitation of classical antiquity, was to receive a higher polish from the hand of a Pascal, a novel brilliancy from the touch of a Montesquieu, and a more numerous prose from the impassioned Rousseau. The age of erudition and taste was to be succeeded by the more energetic age of genius and philosophy. An anecdote recorded of Vaugelas may possibly be true, and is a remarkable evidence of this perpetual mobility of style. This writer lived between 1585 and 1650, and, during thirty years, had been occupied, *more suo*, on a translation of Quintus Curtius. It was during this protracted period that the French style was passing through its rapid transitions. So many phrases had fallen superannuated, that this martyr to the purity of his diction was compelled to rewrite the former part of his version to modernize it with his later improved composition. The learned Menage lived to be old enough to have caught alarm at this vicissitude of taste, and did not scruple to avow that no work could last which was not composed in Latin.

The languages of highly cultivated nations are more subject to this innovation and variableness than the language of a people whose native penury receives but rare accessions. Hence the ancient and continued complaints through all the generations of critics, from the days of Julius Cæsar and Quintilian to those in which we are now writing.* The same hostility against novelty in words or in style is invariably proclaimed. The captiousness of criticism has usually referred to the style of the preceding authors as a standard

* "Curiosities of Literature," art. "History of New Words."

from which the prevalent style of its contemporaries has erringly diverged. The preceptors of genius at all times seem to have been insensible to the natural progress of language, resisting new qualities of style and new forms of expression. In reality, this was inferring that a perfect language exists, and that a creative genius must be trammelled by their limited and arbitrary systems. This prejudice of the venerable brotherhood may, I think, be traced to its source. Every age advantageously compares itself with its predecessor; for it has made some advances, and rarely suspects that the same triumph is reserved for its successor. But besides this illusion in regard to the style, which, like the manners of the time, is passing away, the veteran critic has long been a practised master, and, in the daring and dubious novelties which time has not consecrated, he must descend to a new pupilage: but his rigid habits are no longer flexible; and for the matured arbiter of literature, who tastes "the bitterness of novelty," what remains but an invective against the minting of new words and the versatility of new tastes?

The fallacy of the systematic critics arises from the principle, that a modern language is stationary and stable, like those which are emphatically called "the dead languages," in which every deviation unsupported by authority is legally condemned as a barbarism. But the truth is, that every modern language has always existed in fluctuation and change. The people themselves, indeed, are no innovators: their very phrases are traditional. Popular language can only convey the single uncompounded notions of the people: it is the style of facts, and they are intelligible to one another by the shortest means. Their Saxon-English is nearly monosyllabic, and their phraseology curt. Hence we find that the language of the mob in the year 1382 is precisely the natural style of the mob of this day.* But this popular style can

* These are political squibs thrown out by the mobocracy in the reign of Richard the Second They are preserved in Mr. Turner's "History of Eng

never be set up as the standard of genius, which is mutable with its age, creating faculties and embodying thoughts which do not enter into the experience of the people, and therefore cannot exercise their understandings.

A series of facts will illustrate our principle, that the language of every literary people exists in a fluctuating condition, and that its vaunted purity and its continued stability are chimerical notions.

In this history of the viscissitudes of the English language, we may commence with our remote ancestors, the Anglo-Saxons. When their studies and their language received a literary character, they coveted great pomposity in their style. They interlarded their staves with Latin words; and, even in the reign of the Confessor, the French language was fashionable. "The affectation of the Anglo-Saxon literati was evidently tending to adulterate their language; and, even if the Conquest had not taken place, the purity of the English language would have been speedily destroyed by the admixture of a foreign vocabulary."* Thus early were we perilling our purity.

In 1387, John de Trevisa, translating the Latin Polychro-

land." I print them in their modern orthography. The first specimen runs in familiar rhymes:—

"Jack the Miller asked help to turn his mill aright. He hath ground small, small! The King's son of Heaven he shall pay for all. Look thy Mill go aright with the four sails, and the post stand in steadfastness. With Right and with Might, with Skill and with Will, let Might help Right, and Skill go before Will, and Right before Might, then goes our Mill aright; and if Might go before Right, and Will before Skill, then is our Mill mis adyght."

Now we have plain, intelligible prose:—

"Jack Carter prays you all that ye make a good end of that ye have begun, and do well, and still better and better; for, at the even, men near the day. If the end be well, then is all well. Let Piers the ploughman dwell at home, and dyght us corn. Look that Hobbe the robber be well chastised. Stand manly together in truth, and help the truth, and truth shall help you."

* Sir Francis Palgrave's "Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth;" Proofs and Illustrations, ccxiii.

nicon of Higden, tells us he avoids what he calls "the old and ancient English." A century afterwards, Caxton, printing this translation of Trevisa, had to rewrite it, to change the "rude and old English; that is, to wit, certain words which in these days be neither used nor understood." It might have startled Master Caxton to have suspected that he might be to us what Trevisa was to him; as it had equally amazed Trevisa, when he discovered archaisms which had contracted the rust of time, to have imagined that his fresher English were to be archaisms to his printer in the succeeding century.

At the period at which our present vernacular literature opened on us, Eliot, More, and Ascham maintained great simplicity of thought and idiom; yet even at this period, about 1550, the language seemed in imminent danger. It raised the tone of our primitive critics, and the terrors of neologism took all frightful shapes to their eyes.

A refined critic of our language then was the learned Sir JOHN CHEKE, who at this early period considered that the English language was capable of preserving the utmost purity of style, and he was jealously awake to its slightest violations. A friend of his, Sir THOMAS HOBY, a courtly translator of the "Courtier of Castiglione," had solicited his critical opinion. The learned Cheke, equally friendly and critical, insinuated his abhorrence of "an unknown word;" and apologizes for his corrections, lest he should be accounted "overstraight a deemer of things, by marring his handiwork." Hoby had evidently alarmed, by some sprinklings of Italianisms, some *capriccios* of "new-fangled" words, the chaste ear of our Anglican purist. I preserve this remarkable letter to serve as a singular specimen of our English, unpolluted even by a Latinism.*

* This letter to the translator Hoby has been passed over by those who collected the few letters of the learned CHEKE; and, what seems strange, appears only in the first edition of Hoby's translation, having been omitted in the subsequent editions. Perhaps the translator was not enamoured of his excellent critic.

"Our own tongue should be written *clean* and *pure*, unmixt and unmangled with borrowing of other tongues, wherein, if we take not heed, by time, ever borrowing and never paying, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt. For then doth our tongue naturally and praisably utter her meaning, when she borroweth no counterfeitness of other tongues to attire herself withal; but used plainly her own, with such shift as nature, craft, experience, and following of other excellent, doth lead her unto; and if she want at any time (as, being imperfect, she must), yet let her borrow with such bashfulness that it may appear, that if either the mould of our own tongue could serve us to fashion a word of our own, or if the old denizened words could content and ease this need, we would not boldly venture on unknown words. This I say, not for reproof of you, who have scarcely and necessarily used, where occasion seemeth, a strange word so, as it seemeth to grow out of the matter, and not to be sought for; but for my own defence, who might be counted overstraight a deemer of things, if I give not this account to you, my friend, of my marring this your handiwork."

Such was the tone even of our primitive critics. The terrors of neologism were always before their eyes. All those accessions of the future opulence of the vernacular language were either not foreseen, or utterly proscribed; while, at the same time, the wants and imperfections of the language, amid all its purity or its poverty, were felt and acknowledged. We perceive that even this stern champion of his vernacular idiom confesses that "he may want at time, being imperfect, and must borrow with bashfulness." The cries of the critics suddenly break on us. Another contemporary critic of not inferior authority laments that "there seemed to be no mother-tongue." "The far-journeyed gentlemen" returned home not only in love with foreign fashions, but equally fond "to powder their talk with over-sea language." There was French-English, and English Italianated. Professional men

disfigured the language by conventional pedantries; the finical courtier would prate "nothing but Chaucer." "The mystical wisemen and the poetical clerks delivered themselves in quaint proverbs and blind allegories."* The pedantic race, in their furious Latinisms, bristling with polysyllabic pomposity, deemed themselves fortunate when they could fall upon "dark words," which our critic aptly describes "catching an ink-horn term by the tail." The eloquence of the more volatile fluttered in the splendid patches of modern languages. It seemed as if there were to be no longer a native idiom, and the good grain was choked up by the intruding cockle which flourished by its side. Another contemporary critic announces that "our English tongue was a gallimaufry or hodge-podge of all other speeches." ARTHUR GOLDING grieves over the disjected members of the language:—

> "Our English tongue driven almost out of kind (nature),
> Dismembered, hacked, maimed, rent, and torn,
> Defaced, patched, marred, and made in scorn."

A critic who has left us "An Arte of English Poetry," written perhaps about 1550 or 1560, exhorting the poet to render his language (which, however, he never could in his own verses) "natural, pure, and the most usual of all his country," seemed at a loss where to fix on the standard of style. He would look to the court to be the modellers of speech; but there he acknowledges that "the preachers, the secretaries, and travellers" were great corrupters; and not less "our universities, where scholars use much peevish affectation of words out of the primitive languages." The coarse bran of our own native English was, however, to be sifted; but where was the genuine English idiom to be gathered? Our fastidious critic remonstrates against "the daily talk of northern men." The *good southern* was that "we of Middlesex or Surrey use." Middlesex and Surrey were then to regulate the idiom of all

* Sir Thomas Wilson's "Arte of Rhetoric," 1553.

British men! and all our England was doomed to barbarism, as it varied from "the usual speech of the court, and that of London within sixty miles, and not much above." But was our English more stable within this assigned circumference of the metropolis than any other line of demarcation? About 1580, CAREW informs us that "within these sixty years we have incorporated so many Latin and French words, as the third part of our language consisteth in them."

Some there were among us, who, alarmed that such ceaseless infusions were polluting the native springs of English, would look back with veneration and fondness on our ancient masters. Our great poet SPENSER,* then youthful, declared that the language of CHAUCER was the purest English; and our bard hailed, in a verse often quoted by the critics, —

"Dan Chaucer, well of English undefiled."

But in this well are deposited many waters. Chaucer has been accused of having enriched the language with the spoils of France, blending the old Saxon with the Norman-French and the modern Gallic of his day, for which he has been vehemently censured by the austerity of philological antiquaries. Skinner and his followers have condemned Chaucer for introducing "a wagon-load of words," and have proclaimed that Chaucer "wrote the language of no age;" a reproach which has been transferred to our Spenser himself, who has transplanted many an exotic into the English soil, and recast many an English word for the innocent forgery of a rhyme! So that two of the finest geniuses in our literature, for recasting the language, must lay their heads down to receive the heavy axe of verbal pedantry.

Descending a complete century, in 1656 we are surprised at discovering HEYLIN, at a period relatively modern, reiterat-

* Spenser's protest against the innovators of language may be seen in his "Three Letters," which are preserved unmutilated in Todd's "Spenser." They are deficient in Hughes's edition.

ing the language of his ancient predecessors. This latter critic published his animadversions on the pedantic writings of HAMON L'ESTRANGE, who had opened on us a floodgate of Latinisms. Heylin observes, "More French and Latin words have gained ground upon us since *the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign* than were admitted by our ancestors, not only since the Norman, but the Roman conquest." This was written before the restoration of Charles the Second, when we were to be overrun by Gallicisms. This complaint did not cease with Heylin; for it has often been renewed. Heylin drew up in alphabetical order the uncouth and unusual words which are to be found in Hamon L'Estrange's "History;" and yet many of these foreigners, since the days of Heylin, have become denizens. So unsettled were the notions of our philology with regard to style, that L'Estrange could venture in his rejoinder, which contains sufficient vinaicre, as he writes it, a defence of these hard words, which is entertaining: "As to those lofty words, I declare to all the world this not uningenuous acknowledgment, that having conversed with authors of the noblest and chief remark in several languages, not only their notions, but their very words especially, being of the most elegant import, became at length so familiar with me, as, when I applied myself to this present work, I found it very difficult to renounce my former acquaintance with them; but as they freely offered themselves, so I entertained them upon these considerations. First, I was confident that among learned men they needed no other passe than their own extraction; and, for those who were mere English readers, I saw no reason they should wonder at them, considering that for their satisfaction I had sent along with every foreigner his interpreter, to serve instead of a dictionary." Hamon L'Estrange's "Life of Charles I." was certainly a piece of infelicitous pedantry, as we may judge by this specimen.*

* Heylin's "Observations on the Historie of the Reign of King Charles." L'Estrange's rejoinder may be found in the second edition of his History.

Even great authors glanced with a suspicious eye on these vicissitudes of language, not without a conviction that they themselves were personally interested in these uncertain novelties. It would seem as if Milton, from the new invasion of Gallic words and Gallic airiness which broke in at the Restoration, had formed some uneasy anticipations that his own learned diction and sublime form of poetry might suffer by the transition, and that Milton himself might become as obsolete as some of his great predecessors appeared to his age. The nephew of Milton, in the preface to his "Theatrum Poetarum," where the critical touch of the great master so frequently betrays itself, pleads for our ancient poets, who are not the less poetical because their style is antiquated. Writing in the reign of Charles II., in 1675, he says, "From Queen Elizabeth's reign, the language hath not been so unpolished as to render the poetry of that time ungrateful to such as at this day will take the pains to examine it well. If no poetry should please but what is calculated to every refinement of a language, of how ill consequence this would be for the future, let him consider, and make it his own case, who, being now in fair repute, shall, two or three ages hence, when the language comes to be double-refined, understand that his works are come obsolete and thrown aside. I cannot," he (perhaps Milton) continues, — "I cannot but look upon it as a very pleasant humor, that we should be so compliant with the French custom as to follow set fashions, not only in garments, but in music and poetry. For clothes, I leave them to the discretion of the modish: breeches and doublet will not fall under a metaphysical consideration. But in arts and sciences, as well as in moral notions, I shall not scruple to maintain, that what was *verum et bonum* once, continues to be so always. Now, whether the trunk-hose fancy of Queen Elizabeth's days, or the pantaloon genius of ours, be best, I shall not be hasty to determine."

Would we learn the true history of a modern language, we

must not apply to the CRITICS, who only press for conformity and appeal to precedents; but we must look to those other more practical dealers in words, the LEXICOGRAPHERS, who at once reveal to us all the incomings and outgoings of their great "exchequer of words." Turn over the prefaces of our elder lexicographers. Every one of them pretends to prune away the vocabulary of his predecessors, and to supply, in this mortality of words, those which live on the lips of contemporaries. In the great tome of his record of archaisms and neologisms, the gray moss hangs about the oak, and the graft shoots forth with fresh verdure. BARET, one of our earliest lexicographers, in the reign of Elizabeth, thus expresses himself: "I thought it not meete to stuffe this worke with old obsolete words, which, now a daies, no good writer will use."* Words spurned at by the lexicographer of 1580 had been consecrated by the venerable fathers of our literature and of the Reformation, not a century past; yet another century does not elapse when another dictionary throws all into confusion. HENRY COCKRAM, whose volume has been at least twelve times reprinted, boldly avows, that "what any before me in this kind have begun I have not only fully finished, but thoroughly perfected;" and, presuming on the privilege of "an interpreter of hard English words," the language is wrecked in a stormy pedantry of Latin and Greek terms, which, however, indicate that new corruption of our style which some writers and speakers, as Hamon L'Estrange, were attempting.† What a picture have we sketched of the

* "Alvearie, or quadruple Dictionary of Four Languages," 1580.

† "The English Dictionary, or an Interpreter of Hard English Words," by H. C., gent., 1658. The eleventh and twelfth editions are before me. The last, edited by another person, is not so copious as the former. In Cockram's own edition, we have a first "Book" of his "Hard Words," followed by a second of what he calls "Vulgar Words," which are English. The last editor has wholly omitted the second part. Of the first part, or the "Hard Words," Cockram observes that "they are the *choicest words now in use*, and wherewith our language is enriched and become so copious; to which words the common sense is annexed." — See note on this Dictionary, with some few specimens of its contents, in "Curiosities of Literature," vol. iii.

mortality of words, through all the fleeting stages of their decadency, from TREVISA to CAXTON, from CAXTON to BARET, from BARET to COCKRAM, and from COCKRAM to his numerous successors!

Thus, then, has our language been in perpetual movement; and that "purity of style," whose presumed violation has raised such reiterated querulousness, has, in reality, proved to be but a mocking phantom, fugitive or unsubstantial. Our English has often changed her dress to attract by new graces, and has spoken with more languages than one. She has even submitted to Fashion, that most encroaching usurper of words, who sends them no one knows how and no one knows why, banishing the old and establishing the new; and who has ever found her legitimacy unquestioned, when, in her matured age, we recognize Fashion under the consecrated name of CUSTOM.

But let us not quit this topic of "purity of style" without offering our sympathies for those who have suffered martyrdom in their chimerical devotion. In the days of my youth, there were some who would not write a word unwarranted by Swift or Tillotson: these were to be held fast for pure idiomatic prose, by those who felt insulted by the encumbering lexiphanicisms of the ponderous numerosity of Johnson; and recently a return to our Saxon words, diminutive in size, has been trumpeted in a set oration at the University of Glasgow by a noble personage. This taste is rife among critics of limited studies. Charles Fox, a fine genius who turned towards the pursuits of literature too late in life, was a severe sufferer, and purified his vocabulary with a scrupulosity unknown to any purist, so nervously apprehensive was this great man lest he should not write English. Addison, Bolingbroke, and Middleton were not of sufficient authority; for he would use no word which was not to be found in Dryden. Alas! what disappointments await the few who creep along their Saxon idiom, or who would pore on the free gracefulness

of Dryden as a dictionary of words and phrases! Could the chimerical purity, which these are in search of, be ever found, never would it lend enchantment to their page, should their taste be cold or their fancy feeble. The language of genius must be its own reflection, and the good fortune of authors must receive the stamp used in their own mint.

It happens with the destiny of words as in the destiny of empires. Men in their own days see only the beginnings of things, and more sensibly feel the inconvenience of that state of transition inflicted by innovation, in its first approaches often capricious, always empirical. These vicissitudes of language in their end were to produce a vernacular idiom more wealthy than our native indigence seemed to promise. All those vehement cries of the critics which we have brought together were but the sharp pangs and throes of a parturient language in the natural progress of a long-protracted birth.

A national idiom, in its mighty formation, struggling into its perfect existence, encumbered by the heavy mass in which it lies involved, resembles the creation of the lion of the Bard of Paradise, when —

> "Half appeared
> The tawny lion, PAWING TO GET FREE
> HIS HINDER PARTS."

DIALECTS.

DIALECTS reflect the general language diversified by localities.

A dialect is a variation in the pronunciation, and necessarily in the orthography of words, or a peculiarity of phrase or idiom, usually accompanied by a tone which seems to be as local as the word it utters. It is a language rarely understood out of the sphere of the population by whom it is appropriated. A language is fixed in a nation by a flourishing metropolis of an extensive empire; a dialect may have existed coeval with that predominant dialect which by accident has become the standard or general language; and, moreover, the contemned dialect may occasionally preserve some remains or fragments of the language, which, apparently lost, but hence recovered, enable us rightly to understand even the prevalent idiom.

All nations have had dialects. Greece had them, as France and Italy have them now. Homer could have included in a single verse four or five dialects; but, though the Doric and the Ionic were held the most classical, none of them were barbarous, since their finest writers have composed in these several dialects. Even some Italian poets and comic writers have adopted a favorite dialect; but no classical English author could have immortalized any one of our own.

Ancient Greece, as Mitford describes, "though a narrow country, was very much divided by mountains and politics." And mountains and politics, which impede the general intercourse of men, inevitably produce dialects. Each isolated state with fear or pride affected its independence, not only

by its own customs, but by its accent or its phrase. In France, the standard language was long but a dialect. There, potent nobles, each holding a separate court and sovereignty in his own province, offered many central points of attraction. The Counts of Foix, of Provence, and of Toulouse, and the Dukes of Guienne, of Normandy, and of Brétagne, were all munificent patrons of those who cultivated what they termed *l'art du beau parler*, each in their provincial idiom. These were all subdivisions of the two rival dialects to which the Romane language had given birth. But the river Loire ran between them; and a great river has often been the boundary of a dialect. France was thus long divided. On the south of the Loire, their speech was called the language of *Oc;* and on the north, the language of *Oil*, — names which they derived from the different manner of the inhabitants pronouncing the affirmative *Oui*. The language of the poetical Troubadours on the south of the Loire had not the happier destiny of its rival, used by the Trouvères on the north. It was this which became the standard language, while the other remains a dialect. Here we have a remarkable incident in the history of dialects in a great country: it was long doubtful which was to become the national language; and it has happened, if we may trust an enthusiast of Languedoc, that his idiom, expressing with more vowelly softness and *naïveté* the familiar emotions of love and friendship, and gayety and *bonhomie*, gave way to a harsher idiom and a sharp nasal accent; and all ended by the Parisian detecting the provincials by their shibboleth, and calling them all alike Gascons, — and their taste for exaggeration and rhodomontade, gasconades; while the southerns, who hold that what is called the French language is only a perversion of their own dialect, like our former John Bull, fling on the Parisian the old Gaulish appellative of *Franchiman*.*

* "Dictionnaire Languédocien-françois," par l'Abbé de Sauvages. "*Franchiman* est formé de l'Allemand, et signifie *homme de France*." The

The dialects of England were produced by occurrences which have happened to no other nation. Our insular site has laid us open to so many masters, that it was long doubtful whether Britain would ever possess a uniform language. The aboriginal Britons left some of their words behind them in their flight, as the Romans had done in their dominion:* and even the visiting Phœnician may have dropped some words on our coasts. The Jutes, the Angles, and the Saxons brought in a new language, and, arriving from separate localities, that language came to us diversified by dialects; and the Danes, too, joined the northern brotherhood of pirate-kings who planted themselves in our soil. The gradual predominance of the West-Saxon over the petty kingdoms which subdivided Britain first approached to the formation of a national language. The West-Saxon was the land of Alfred; and the royal cultivation of its dialect, supreme in purity as the realm stood in power, rendered it the standard language which we now call Anglo-Saxon.

"Had the Heptarchy (Octarchy) continued," observed Bishop Percy, "our English language would probably have been as much distinguished for its dialects as the Greek, or at least as that of the several independent states of Italy." In truth, we remained much in that condition while a power hostile to the national character assumed the sovereignty. So unsettled was the English language, that a writer at the close of the fourteenth century tells us that different parts of the

abbé wrote in 1756, when he did not care to translate too literally: the Frank-man meant the *Free man*, for the Franks called themselves so, as "the free people." This learned Gascon, in his zeal for the *Langue d'oc*, explains, "*Parla Franchiman*" means "parler avec l'accent (bon ou mauvais) des provinces du nord du royaume;" an insinuation that the French accent might not be positively the better one. The good abbé had such a perfect conviction of the superiority of his Languedocians, that he would have no other servants, not only for their superior integrity, but for that of their language.

* "Palgrave," 174. They also received some in exchange; many words in Cæsar being British. — *Hearne's Leland's Itinerary*, vi.

island experienced a difficulty to understand one another. A diversity of pronunciation, as well as a diversity in the language, was so prevalent, that the Northern, the Southern, and the Middle-land men were unintelligible when they met: the Middle-land understood the Northern and the Southern better than the Northman and the Southman comprehended one another: the English people seemed to form an assemblage of distinct races. Even to this day, a scene almost similar might be exhibited. Should a peasant of the Yorkshire dales, and one from the vales of Taunton, and another from the hills of the Chiltern, meet together, they would require an interpreter to become intelligible to each other; but, in this dilemma, what county could produce the Englishman so versed in provincial dialects as to assist his three honest countrymen?

If etymology often furnishes a genealogy of words through all their authentic descents, so likewise a map of provincial idioms might be constructed to indicate the localities of the dialects. There we might observe how an expansive and lengthened river, or intervening fells and mountains which separate two counties, can stop the course of a dialect, so that the idiom current on one side, when it passes the borders becomes intrusive, little regarded, and, ere it reaches a third county, has expired in the passage. Thus the Parret, we are told, is the boundary of the Somersetshire dialect; for words used east of the Parret are only known by synonymes on the west side. The same incident occurs in Italy, where a single river runs through the level plain: there the Piedmontese peasant from the western end meeting with a Venetian from the eastern could hold but little colloquial intercourse together: a Genoese would be absolutely unintelligible to both; for, according to their proverb, "language was the gift of God, but the Genoese dialect was the invention of the Devil." In those rank dialects left to run to seed in their wild state, without any standard of literature, we hardly recognize the national idiom. The Italian language sprung from one common

source, — its maternal Latin; but this we might not suspect, should we decide solely by its dialects: and we may equally wonder how some of our own could ever have been mangled and distorted out of the fair dimensions of the language of England.

All who speak a dialect contract a particular intonation, which, almost as much as any local words, betrays their soil: these provincial tones are listened to from the cradle; and, as all dialects are of great antiquity, this sounding of the voice has been bequeathed from generation to generation.* It is sometimes a low muttering in the throat, a thick guttural like the Welsh, or a shrill nasal twang, or a cadence or chant: centuries appear not to have varied the tone more than the vocable. The romance of "Octavien Imperator," which was written possibly earlier than the reign of Henry VI., is in the Hampshire dialect nearly as it is spoken now. The speech of a Yorkshireman is energetically described by our ancient Trevisa. "It is so sharpe, slytting, frotyng, and unshape, that we sothern men maye unneth understond that language." As we advance in the North, the tones of the people are described as "round and sonorous, broad open vowels, and the richness and fulness of the diphthongs fill their mouths" with a firm, hardy speech.

A striking contrast is observable among those who by their secluded position have held little intercourse with their neighbors, and have contracted an overweening estimation of themselves, and a provincial pride in their customs, manners, and language. Norfolk, surrounded on three sides by the sea,

* In that very curious "Logonomia Anglica" of the learned Alexander Gill, — the father; for his son of the same name succeeded him as master of St. Paul's, — we have the orthoepy of our dialects given with great exactness. This work was produced about 1619, and we find the peculiar provincial pronunciation of the present day. A work so curious in the history of our vernacular tongue should not have been composed in Latin. Mr. Guest has carefully translated a judicious extract. — *History of English Rhythms*, ii. 204.

remains unaltered to this day, and still designates as "shiremen" all who are born out of Norfolk, not without "some little expression of contempt." There is "a narrowness and tenuity in their pronunciation," such as we may fancy — for it is but a fancy — would steal out of the lips of reserved, proudful men, and who, as their neighbors of Suffolk run their common talk into strange melancholy cadences, have characterized their peculiar intonation as "the Suffolk whine." In Derbyshire the pronunciation is broad, and they change the G into K. The Lancashire folk speak quick and curt, omit letters, or sound three or four words all together: thus *I wou'didd'n*, or *I woudyedd'd*, is a cacophony which stands for *I wish you would!* When the editor of a Devonshire dialect found that it was aspersed as the most uncouth jargon in England, he appealed to the Lancashire.*

But such vile rustic dissonance or mere balderdash concerns not our vernacular literature, though it seems that even such agrestic rubbish may have its utility in a provincial vocabulary; for the glossary to the "Exmoor language" was drawn up for the use of lawyers on the western circuit, who frequently mistook the evidence of a rustic witness for want of an interpretation of his words. Some ludicrous misconceptions of equivocal terms or some ridiculous phraseology have been recorded in other counties, among the judges and the bar at a county assize.

But it is among our provincial dialects that we discover many beautiful archaisms, scattered remnants of our language, which explain those obscurities of our more ancient writers, singularities of phrase, or lingual peculiarities, which have so often bewildered the most acute of our commentators. After all their voluminous research and their conjectural temerity,

* The late Dr. Valpy told me that Mr. Walker, the orthoepist, had so intimate a knowledge of the provincial peculiarities of pronunciation, that, in a private course of reading at Oxford with twelve undergraduates, he told each of them the respective place of their birth or early education.

a villager in Devonshire or in Suffolk, and, more than either, the remoter native of the North Countree, with their common speech, might have recovered the baffled commentators from their agony. The corrections of modern editors have often been discovered to be only ingenious corruptions of their own, whenever the original provincial idiom has started up.

These provincial modes of speech have often actually preserved for us the origin of English phraseology, and enlightened the philologist in a path unexplored. In one of the most original and most fanciful of the dramas of Ben Jonson, "the Sad Shepherd," the poet designed to appropriate a provincial dialect to the Witch Maudlin's family. He had consulted Lacy the comedian, who was a native of Yorkshire, respecting the northern phraseology. Unfortunately, this drama was never finished; and the consequence is, that the dialects are incorrectly given, and are worsened by the orthography of the printer. Yet it was from this imperfect attempt to convey some notion of our dialects that Horne Tooke was able to elucidate one of his grammatical discoveries in regard to the conjunction IF, which, from "the Sad Shepherd," is demonstrated to be anciently the imperative of the verb GIF, or give. Thus it was, by apparently very rude dialects, this famous philologist was enabled to substantiate beyond doubt a signification which had occurred to no one but himself.*

A language in the progress of its refinement loses as well as gains in the amount of words and the good fortune of expressive phrases. Some become equivocal by changing their signification, and some fall obsolete, one cannot tell why, for custom or caprice arbitrate, guided by no law, and often with an unmusical ear. These discarded but faithful servants now treated as outcasts, and not even suspected to have any habitation, are safely lodged in some of our dialects. As the people are faithful traditionists, repeating the words of their

* Tooke's "Diversions of Purley," p. 141.

forefathers, and are the longest to preserve their customs, they are the most certain antiquaries; and their oral knowledge and their ancient observances often elucidate many an archæological obscurity. Hence two remarkable consequences have been discovered in the history of our popular idioms: many words and phrases used in the land of Cockney, now deemed not only vulgar, but ungrammatical, are, in fact, not corruptions of the native tongue, but the remains of what was anciently at different periods the established national dialect.* This transmitted language descended to the humbler classes, unimpaired and unaugmented, through a long line of ancestry. Again: it is often probable that the provincial word which in its pronunciation merely reverses the order of the letters, as now uttered, and which is only heard from the mouths of the people, may convey the original spoken sound, and be the genuine English. Are we quite sure that the polishers may not often have been the corrupters of our language? Nor let us be positive that the metropolitan taste has always fixed on the most felicitous or the most forcible of our idiomatic words or phrases, since we may discover some lingering among our provincial dialects which should never have been dismissed, and which claim to be restored. When JOHNSON compiled his "Dictionary," he was not aware of the authentic antiquity of our dialectic terms and phrases. Our literary antiquities had not yet engaged the attention of general scholars. Provincialisms were not deemed by the legislator of our language legitimate words: he did not recognize their primitive claims nor their relative affinities, but ejected them as vagabonds. But words are not barbarous nor obsolete because no longer used in our written composition,

* In "Anecdotes of the English Language," by Samuel Pegge, an antiquary, who called himself "an old modern," the reader will find several curious exemplifications of the vulgar dialect, sometimes fancifully, but often satisfactorily ascertained. It is amusing to detect what we call *vulgarisms* composing the language of Chaucer and Shakspeare, and even our Bibles and Liturgies.

since some of the most exquisite and picturesque, which have ceased to enrich our writings, live in immortal pages. After the issue of Johnson's great labor, our national literature began to attract the studies of literary men, who soon perceived how this neglected but existing stock of idiomatic English in our provincialisms more certainly explained our elder writers in verse and prose. Amid the murmurs raised by the archæologists, Ash attempted to supply the palpable deficiency of Johnson; but the matter was too abundant, and his space too contracted. In vain he attempted his "Supplement;" all the counties in England seemed to rise against the luckless glossarist: but, notwithstanding its limited utility, his vocabulary was often preferred for its copiousness to the more elaborate lexicon. The spirit of inquiry was now abroad after the "winged words;" and ingenious persons, within these twenty years,* have produced a number of pro-

* Ray was the first who collected "Local Words, *North Country* and *South* and *East Country*." "The Exmoor Scolding and Courtship" is an authentic specimen of the *Exmoor language*. The words were collected by a blind fiddler, and the dialogues were written by a clergyman with the fiddler's assistance, before 1725. We have a glossary of Lancashire words and phrases, contained in the humorous works of Tim Bobbin. Other county glossarists have appeared within the last fifteen years, — Brockett's "North Country Words;" "Suffolk Words and Phrases," by Major Moor; Mr. Roger Wilbraham's "Attempt at a Glossary of Cheshire Words;" Mr. Jennings's "Dialect of the West of England," particularly the Somersetshire words; Mr. Britton on those of Wiltshire; and the Rev. Joseph Hunter has given "the Hallamshire Glossary," to which are appended "Words used in Halifax," by the Rev. John Watson, and also an addition to the "Yorkshire Words," by Thoresby, the Leeds antiquary.

An investigation of the origin, nature, and history of Dialects was proposed by the late Dr. Boucher for a complete glossary of all the dialects of the kingdom. But these precious stores, not only of the vocables, but of the domestic history of England, — its manners, occupations, amusements, diet, dress, buildings, and other miscellaneous topics, — rich in all the affluence of the laborious readings of more years than the siege of Troy, was but bread cast away on the waters, and was never given to the public for want of public support. After the author's death, two eminent editors zealously resumed the work, which was already prepared; but the public remained so little instructed of its value, it suddenly ceased! Works of national utility should

vincial glossaries; but several are still wanting, particularly those of Kent and Sussex and Hampshire. All these glossaries collected together might form a provincial lexicon marking each county. A few might be allowed to enter into the great dictionary of the English language: but that would not be their safest place; for they would then lie at the mercy of successive editors, who would not always discern a precious archaism amid the baseness and corruption of language. The origin, the nature, and the history of our provincial idioms have yet never been investigated, though the subject, freed from its mere barbarisms, opens a diversified field to the philosopher, the antiquary, and the philologist.

Grose, who wrote in 1785, notices the state of those counties which were remote from the metropolis, or which had no immediate intercourse with it before "newspapers and stage-coaches imported scepticism, and made every ploughman and thresher a politician and a freethinker." The accelerated intercourse of the people has long passed beyond the diurnal folio and the evanescent stage-coach; and, in a century of rail-roads and national schools, the provincial glossary will finally vanish away.

be consecrated as national property; and means should be always ready to avert such a calamity to the literature of England, and to the information of Englishmen, as was the suppression of the labors of BOUCHER.

MANDEVILLE, OUR FIRST TRAVELLER.

MANDEVILLE was the Bruce of the fourteenth century, as often calumniated, and even ridiculed. The most ingenuous of voyagers has been condemned as an idle fabulist; the most cautious, as credulous to fatuity; and the volume of a genuine writer, which has been translated into every European language, has been formally ejected from the collection of authentic travels. His truest vindication will be found by comprehending him; and, to be acquainted with his character, we must seek for him in his own age.

At a period when Europe could hardly boast of three leisurely wayfarers stealing over the face of the universe; when the Orient still remained but a Land of Faery, and "the map of the world" was yet unfinished; at a time when it required a whole life to traverse a space which three years might now terminate, — Sir JOHN MANDEVILLE set forth to enter unheard-of regions. Returning home after an absence of more than thirty years, he discovered a "mervayle" strange as those which he loved to record, — that he was utterly forgotten by his friends!

He had returned "maugre himself;" for four and thirty years had not satiated his curiosity. His noble career had submitted to ordinary infirmities, — to gout and the aching of his limbs: these, he lamentably tells, had "defined the end of my labor against my will, God knoweth." The knight in this pilgrimage of life seems to have contracted a duty with God, that while he had breath he should peregrinate, and, having nothing to do at home, be honorable in his generation by his enterprise over the whole earth; and earnestly he prays "to

all the *readers* and *hearers* of my book" (for "hearers" were then more numerous than "readers") "to say for him a *Pater-Noster* with an *Ave-Maria*." He wrote for "solace in his wretched rest;" but the old passion, the devotion of his soul, finally triumphed over all arthritic pangs. The globe evidently was his true home; and thus Liege, and not London, received the bones of an unwearied traveller, whose thoughts were ever passing beyond the equator.

With us, to whom an excursion to "the Londe of Promyssioun or of Behest" has sometimes arisen out of a morning engagement; we, who, impelled by steam, go "whither we list," with those billets which might serve as letters of recommendation in the steppes of Tartary, — we may wonder how our knight, who would not win his way by the arts of commerce, like his predecessor Marco Polo, bore up his chivalry; for, in his traversing, he had nothing to offer but his honorable sword, and probably his medical science, which might be sometimes as perilous. But difficulties insuperable to us could not enter into the emotions, nor were they the accidents, which impeded the traveller, "who on the day of St. Michael, in the year of our Lord 1322, passed the sea, and went the way to Hierusalem, and to behold the mervayles of Inde." A deep religious emotion, an obscure indefinite curiosity, and a courageous decision to wander wherever the step of man could press on the globe, to tell the world "the mervayles" it unconsciously holds within its orb, were the inspiration of a journey which stood next in solemnity to a departure to the world of spirits. Sir John had prepared himself; for he was learned, not only in languages, but in authentic romance and in romantic history: and he honestly resolved to tell all "the mervayles" which he had seen, and those which he had not; and these last were not the least.

Sir John Mandeville's probity remains unimpeached; for the accuracy of whatever he relates from his own personal observation has been confirmed by subsequent travellers. On

his return to Europe, he hastened to Rome to submit his book to the pope, and to "his wise council," and "those learned men of all nations who dwell at that court." The volume was critically reviewed; and his holiness "ratified and confirmed my book in all points" by referring to an account in Latin: this account was probably written by some missionary, — Rubriquis had been despatched on an unsuccessful mission to Christianize the great Khan of Tartary in 1230; or it was the writings of Marco Polo, which could not be unknown at Rome. In that day, all real information was consigned to the fugitive manuscript, partially known, and often subject to the interpolations and capricious alterations of its possessor; and, what sometimes occurred, to the silent plagiarisms of other writers, of which even Mandeville himself has been suspected.

The pope decreed that not only all that Mandeville related was veracious, but that the Latin book which his holiness possessed contained *much more*, and from whence the Mappa Mundi had been made. Indeed, Mandeville has himself told us that he wrote only from his recollections, as they "would come into his mind:" these, necessarily, were often broken and obscure. Some "mervayles" remained unrecorded, and hereafter were to be "more plainly told;" but I fear these are lost for us.

In this "true" book, we find many things very untrue; but we may doubt whether any in that day were as positive in this opinion. The author himself designed no imposition on his readers: he tells us what he believed, part of which he had seen, and the rest he had heard, and sometimes had transcribed from sources deemed by him authentic. Who can suspect the knight of spotless honor, and whose piety would not relinquish his *Ave-Marias* for a dominion? Having fought during two years under the ensign of the Sultan of Egypt, and being offered in marriage the sultan's daughter and a province, he refused both, when his Christianity was to be exchanged for Mahometanism.

This was a period when the marvellous never weakened the authenticity of a tale. The mighty tome of Pliny, that awful repository of all the errors of antiquity, and other writers of equal name, detail prodigies and legends, and so do the Fathers. Who would not have rejoiced to transcribe Pliny or St. Austen? Who imagined that all the delectable adventures of the romances, over which they passed many a dreamy day, with the very names of the personages and the very places where they occurred, were solely chimeras of the brain? The learned Mandeville was evidently not one of these sceptics; for he observes, that "the trees of the sun and of the moon are well known to have spoken to King Alisaundre, and warned him of his death." The unquestioned fact is in that famed romance; and others might be referred to, if we required additional authority. I have read of these talking-trees of the sun and moon in *Guarino detto il Meschino*, who lived a year among them to learn his own genealogy, and then was graceless enough to laugh at these timber-oracles. Mandeville forgot not in the Island of Lango, not distant from Crete, the legend of the unfortunate "Lady of the Land," who remained a dragoness because no one had the hardihood to kiss her lips to disenchant her. He tells likewise of the Faery Lady who guarded the sparrow-hawk: whoever ventured to assist that lady during three days and nights was rewarded by the boon of having whatever he wished. A king, who, not wanting any thing, had the audacity to wish to have the lady herself, was fairly warned that he did not know what he asked, as happens to the reckless; but, persisting in his absolute will, he incurred the curse of perpetual war to the last of his race!

We trace such tales among the romances, with all their circumstances; and some may have reached the listener from the Arabian tale-teller. The monsters he describes, Mandeville never invented: these, human and animal, he gave, as some of his predecessors had done, from Pliny or Ælian or

Ctesias,* who have sent them down to be engraven in the Great Nuremberg Chronicle, and adorned in the immortal page of Shakspeare. Marco Polo had noticed that portentous bird which could lift an elephant by its claws: he does not tell us that he had seen any bird of this wing; but we all know where it is to be found,—in the Arabian Tales! Sir Thomas Browne accuses Mandeville of *confirming* the fabulous accounts of India by Ctesias: but, in truth, our knight does not "confirm these refuted notions of antiquity;" he only repeats them, with the prelude of "men seyn." No one was more honest than Mandeville; for, when he had to describe the locality of paradise, he fairly acknowledges that "he cannot speak of it properly, for I was not there; it is far beyond: but, as I have *heard say* of wise men, it is on the highest part of the earth, nigh to the circle of the moon." However, he has contrived to describe the wall, which is not of stone, but of moss, with but a single entrance, "closed with brennynge fyre;" and though no mortal could enter, yet it was known that there was a well in paradise, whence flowed the four floods that run through the earth. "Wise men," he tells us, said this; some of these "wise men" were the Rabbins: and, three centuries afterwards, the accounts of paradise, by a finer genius than Mandeville, the illustrious Rawleigh, remained much the same.

To explain some of those incredible incidents which occurred to the author himself might exercise some critical ingenuity. Mandeville's adventure in "the Valley Perilous,"

* CTESIAS, a physician in high repute at the Persian court, and often referred to by Diodorus. He has been universally condemned as a fabulous writer, to which charge his description of some animals was liable. But a naturalist of the highest order, the famous CUVIER, has perhaps done an act of justice to this fabricator of animals. Ctesias reported the mythological creations which he had witnessed in hieroglyphical representations as actual living animals. It is glorious to remove from the darkened name of a writer, unjustly condemned, the obloquy of two thousand years. — *Theory of the Earth*, translated by Professor Jameson, 76.

when he saw the Devil's head with eyes of flame, great plenty of gold and silver, which he was too frightened to touch, and, moreover, a multitude of dead bodies, as if a battle had been fought there, might probably be resolved into some volcanic eruption, the rest supplied by his own horrifying imagination: for he tells, with great simplicity, "I was more devout then than ever I was before or after, and all for the dread of fiends that *I saw in divers figures;*" that is, at the *shapes* of the disparted rocks. The travellers were beaten down by tempests, winds, and thunder, which raged in this pent-up vale. As he marks the locality, the spot may yet be ascertained.

There was no imposition practised in all such legends; it is we who are startled by the supernatural in a personal narrative: but, in the fourteenth century, the more wonderful the tale, the more authentic it appeared, as it sunk into the softest and richest moulds of the most germinating imagination. The readers or the hearers were as well prepared to believe, as the writers prompt to gather up, their fictions. Collections of "Mirabilia Mundi," "Wonders," were a fashionable title applied to any single country, as well as to the world, — to England or Ireland, to the Holy Land or the Indies. The "Mirabilia" might be the running-title for a whole system of geography. The age of imagination has long been unfurnished of all its ingenious garniture, and yet we still catch at some evanescent hour of fancy susceptible of those ancient delights. We have lost something for which we have no substitute. Would not the modern novelist rejoice in the privilege of intermingling supernatural inventions to break the level of his every-day incidents and his trivial passions so soon forgotten? But that glowing day has set, leaving none of its ethereal hues in our cold twilight. Mandeville may still be read for those wild arabesques which so long unjustly proved fatal to his authentic narrative. His simplicity often warrants its truth: he assures us that Jerusalem is placed in the middle of the earth, because when he stuck his staff in the

ground, exactly at noon, it cast no shadow; and, having ascertained the spherical form of the globe, he marvels how the antipodes, whose feet are right upwards towards us, yet do not fall into the firmament! When he describes the elegant ornaments of "a vine made of gold that goeth all about the hall, with many bunches of grapes, some white, and the red made of rubies," he tells what he had seen in some divan; but when he records that "the emperor hath in his chamber a pillar of gold, in which is a ruby and carbuncle a foot long, which lighteth all his chamber by night," it may be questioned whether this carbuncle be any thing more than an Arabian fancy, a tale to which he had listened. Some of his ocular marvels have been confirmed by no questionable authority. Mandeville's description of a magical exhibition before the Khan of Tartary is a remarkable instance of the strange optical illusions of the scenical art, and the adroitness of the Indian jugglers: a similar scene appears in a recent version of the autobiography of the Emperor Akber. What seemed the spells of magic to the Europeans of that age, and of which some marvellous descriptions were brought to Europe by the crusaders or the pilgrims, and embellished the romances, our exquisite masks and our grand pantomimes have realized. Three centuries were to elapse ere the court of England could rival the necromancy of the court of Tartary.

Mandeville first composed his travels in the Latin language, which he afterwards translated into French, and lastly out of French into English, that "every man of my nation may understand it." We see the progressive estimation of the languages by this curious statement which Mandeville has himself given. The author first secured the existence of his work in a language familiar to the whole European world; the French was addressed to the politer circles of society; and the last language the author cared about was the vernacular idiom, which, at that time the least regarded, required all the patriotism of the writer in this devotion of his pen.

Copies of these travels were multiplied till they almost equalled in number those of the Scriptures. Now we may smile at the "mervayles" of the fourteenth century and of Mandeville; but it was the spirit of these intrepid and credulous minds which has marched us through the universe. To the children of imagination perhaps we owe the circumnavigation of the globe and the universal intercourse of nations.*

* Of modern editions of Mandeville's "Travels in England," that of 1725, printed by Bowyer, is a large octavo. There are numerous manuscripts of Mandeville in existence. An edition collated might discover either omissions or interpolations. This might serve as the labor of an amateur. Mandeville has not had the fortune of his predecessor, Marco Polo, to have met with a Marsden, learned in geographical and literary illustration.

Long subsequently to the time that this article was written, this edition of 1725 has been reprinted, with the advantage of a bibliographical introduction by Mr. Halliwell, and a collation of texts. [It was published in 1839, in an octavo volume of 326 pages, with illustrative engravings from manuscripts and printed books.]

CHAUCER.

In the chronology of our poetical collectors, Gower takes precedence of Chaucer unjustly; for Chaucer had composed many of his works in the only language which he has written, before the elder claimed the honors of an English vernacular poet, and probably then only emulating the success of him who first set the glorious example. Nor less in the rank of poetry must Chaucer hold the precedence. The first true English poet is Chaucer; and, notwithstanding that the rhythmical cadences of his unequal metre are now lost for us, Chaucer is the first modeller of the heroic couplet and other varieties of English versification. By the felicity of his poetic character, Chaucer was not only the parent but the master of those two schools of poetry which still divide its votaries by an idle rivalry, and which have been traced, like our architecture, the one to a Gothic origin, and the other to a classical model.

The personal history of Chaucer, poetical and political, might have been susceptible of considerable development, had the poet himself written it; for his biographers had no life to record. Speght, one of the early editors, in the good method of that day, having set down a variety of heads, including all that we might wish to know of any man, — when this methodizer of commonplaces came to fill up these well-planned divisions concerning Chaucer, he could only disprove what was accepted, and supply only what is uncertain. The "Life of Chaucer" by Godwin is a theoretical life; and, as much as relates to Chaucer himself, a single fatal fact, when

all was finished, dispersed the baseless vision.* The whole rested on the unauthenticated and contradictory statements of Leland, who, writing a century after the times of Chaucer, hastily collected unsubstantial traditions, and, what was less pardonable in Leland, fell into some anachronisms.

This defective chronology in the life of the poet has involved the more important subject of the chronology of his works. Posterity may be little concerned in the dates of his birth and his burial, his unknown parentage, his descriptive name, and, above all, his suspicious shield, which the heralds opined must have been blazoned out of the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth propositions of the first book of Euclid, from the poet's love of geometry, or, more obviously, from having no coat-of-arms to show of "far more ancient antiquity." But posterity would have been interested in the history of the genius of Chaucer, who, having long paced in a lengthened circuit of verbal version and servile imitation, passed through some remarkable transitions, kindling the cold ashes of translation into the fire of invention; from cloudy allegory breaking forth into the sunshine of the loveliest landscape-painting; and from the amatory romance gliding into that vein of humor and satire which in his old age poured forth a new creation. All this he might himself have told, or Gower might have revealed, had the elder bard, who lauded

* After Godwin had sent to press his biography of Chaucer, a deposition on the poet's age in the Herald's College detected the whole erroneous arrangement: as the edifice so ingeniously constructed had fallen on the aerial architect, he alleged truly that the deposition "contradicted the received accounts of all the biographers;" in fact, they had repeated original misstatements. The appendix, therefore, to the history of this modern biographer stands as a perpetual witness against its authenticity: there are some histories to which an appendix might prove to be as fatal. In this dilemma, our bold sophist was "absurd and uncharitable enough" to add one more conjecture to his "Life of Chaucer," — that "the poet, from a motive of vanity, had been induced *to state on oath* that he was about forty, when, in truth, he was fifty-eight!" — *Hippisley's Chapters on Early English Literature*, 85.

the lays and "ditties" of the youth of "the Clerk of Venus," loved him as well in his old age. But elegant literature, as distinguished from scholastic, was then without price or reward. The few men of genius who have written at this early period are only known to us by their writings; and probably were more known to their contemporaries by the station which they may have occupied, than by that which they maintain with posterity.

By royal patents and grants to the poet, we trace his early life at court, his various appointments, and his honorable missions to Genoa and to France; we must not add as confidently his visit to Petrarch.

Chaucer, in his political life, was bound up with the party of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster; and, by a congenial spirit, with the novel doctrines of his friend, Dr. Wickliffe. The sister of his lady finally became the third Duchess of Lancaster, and the family alliance strengthened the political bond. How the Lancastrian exploded in the poet, something we know, but little we comprehend; and those who have attempted to lift the veil have not congratulated themselves on their success. The poet himself has not intrusted his secret to posterity, except, as is usual with poets, by eloquent lamentations. The exposition of a political transaction is never without some valued results; and, though deprived of names and dates, we are not without some dim lights: the palpable truth may not be obvious, but it may happen that we may stumble on it.

Chaucer himself has stated, "In *my youth* I was drawn in to be assenting to certain *conjurations* and other *great matters of ruling of citizens;* and those things have been my *drawers-in and exciters* in the matters *so painted and colored*, that *first* to me seemed then *noble and glorious for all the people.*"

Here the tale is plain, for this is the language of one who early in life had engaged in some popular scheme; and these early indications of the temper of the Wickliffite or the

Lancastrian, or both, had subsequently led to some more perilous attempts. They were, like all reforms, something "noble and glorious for the people;" and, as sometimes happens among reformers, what *at first* appeared to promise so well, ended in disappointment, and "penance in a dark prison."

The locality of this patriotic act was the city of London. He alludes to "free elections by great clamors of much people, for great disease of misgovernment in the hands of *torcentious citizens*." When the fatal day arrived that he openly joined with a party for "the people," against those citizens whom he has so awfully denounced, it is evident, though we have no means to discriminate factions in an age of factions,* that he and his "conjurors" discovered that "all the people" were not of one mind. This votary or this victim of reform suddenly flings his contempt at "the hatred of the mighty senators of London or of its commonalty," and closes with a painful remembrance of "the janglings of THE SHEEPY PEOPLE"! The style of Chaucer bears the stamp of passionate emotions; words of dimension, or of poignant sarcasm. The "torcentious citizens" is an awful bolt, and "the sheepy people" is sufficiently picturesque.

In dismay the whole party took flight. Chaucer, in Zealand, exhausted his means to supply the wants of his political associates, till he himself found that even the partnership of common misery does not always preserve men from ingratitude. Returning home, potent persecutors cast him into a

* It has been alleged by more than one writer, that this mysterious affair relates to the election for the mayoralty of John of Northampton, a Wickliffite and a Lancastrian; but Mr. Turner, whose researches are on a more extended scale than any of his predecessors, truly observes, that "there are other periods besides the one usually selected to which the personal evils which Chaucer complains of are applicable." — *Hist. of England*, v. 296 It is as likely to have occurred when Nicholas Brambre, a confidential partisan of government in the city, appointed to the mayoralty by his party, caught "the freemen" by ambushes of armed men, and turned the Guildhall into a fortress. At such a time, "free elections" might have been considered by Chaucer as something "noble and glorious for all the people."

dungeon. Was the Duke of Lancaster absent, or the Duke of Gloucester in power? Let us observe, that in all these dark events the loyalty of the poet is never impeached; for Chaucer enjoyed without interruption the favor of both his sovereigns, Edward III. and Richard II.; and we discover that once, when dismissed from office, Richard allowed him to serve by deputy, which was evidence that Chaucer had never been dismissed by the king himself. The whole transaction, whatever it was, was a political movement between two factions. Chaucer, indeed, pleads that whatever he had done was under the control of others, himself being but "the servant of his sovereign." At that period, the factions in the state were more potent than the monarch. In the convulsive administration of a youthful prince, they who oppose the court are not necessarily opposing the sovereign.

It was behind the bars of a gloomy window in the Tower, where "every hour appeared to be a hundred winters," that Chaucer, recent from exile and sore from persecution, was reminded of a work popular in those days, and which had been composed in a dungeon, — "The Consolations of Philosophy," by Boethius, — and which he himself had formerly translated. He composed his "TESTAMENT OF LOVE," substituting for the severity of an abstract being the more genial inspiration of love itself. But the fiction was a reality, and the griefs were deeper than the fancies. In this chronicle of the heart, the poet mourns over "the delicious hours he was wont to enjoy," of his "richesse," and now of his destitution, the vain regret of his abused confidence, the treachery of all that "summer-brood" who never approach the lost friend in "the winter hour" of an iron solitude. The poet energetically describes his condition: there he sate "witless, thoughtful; and sightless, looking." This work the poet has composed in prose: but, in the leisure of a prison, the diction became more poetical in thoughts and in words than the language at that time had yet attained to; and, for those

who read the black-letter, it still retains its impressive eloquence.

But this apology which Chaucer has left of his conduct in this political transaction has incurred a fatal censure. "Never," observes Mr. Campbell, "was an obscure affair conveyed in a more obscure apology." His political integrity has been freely suspected. Chaucer has even been struck by the brilliant arrow of the Viscount de Chateaubriand. "Courtisan, Lancastrien, Wickliffiste, infidèle à ses convictions, traitre à son parti, tantôt banni, tantôt voyageur, tantôt en faveur, tantôt en disgrace." No, thou eloquent Gaul! Chaucer never was out of favor, however he may have been more than once dismissed from his office; nor can we know whether the poet was ever "infidèle à ses convictions."

Obscure must ever remain the tale of justification in a political transaction which terminated on the part of the apologist by revealing "disclosures for the peace of the kingdom," denied by those whom they implicated, though their truth was offered to be maintained by the accuser, in the custom of the times, by single combat; and by confessions which acknowledge errors of judgment, but not of intention; and by penitence, which, if the patriot designed what was "glorious to all the people," he should never have repented of.

This obscure apology conceals the agony of conflicting emotions, — indignation at ungrateful associates, and a base desertion of ancient friends, who were plotting against him. Whether Chaucer was desirous of burying in obscurity a story of torturous details, or one too involved in confused motives for any man to tell with the precision of a simple statement, we know of no evidence which can enable us to decide with any certainty on an affair which no one pretends to understand. Chaucer might have been the scapegoat of the sovereign, or the champion of the people. We can rather decide on his calamity than his conduct. Many are the causes which may dissolve the bonds of faithless "conjurations;" and

it is not always he who abandons a party who is to be criminated by political tergiversation.

The circumstances of Chaucer's life had combined with his versatile powers. He had mingled with the world's affairs both at home and abroad: accomplished in manners, and intimately connected with a splendid court, Chaucer was at once the philosopher who had surveyed mankind in their widest sphere, the poet who haunted the solitudes of Nature, and the elegant courtier whose opulent tastes are often discovered in the graceful pomp of his descriptions. It was no inferior combination of observation and sympathy which could bring together into one company the many-colored conditions and professions of society, delineated with pictorial force, and dramatized by poetic conception, reflecting themselves in the tale which seemed most congruous to their humors. The perfect identity of these assembled characters, after the lapse of near five centuries, makes us familiar with the domestic habits and modes of thinking of a most interesting period in our country, not inspected by the narrow details of the antiquarian microscope, but in the broad mirror reflecting that truth or satire which alone could have discriminated the passions, the pursuits, and the foibles of society. Thus the painter of Nature, who caught the glow of her skies and her earth in his landscape, was also the miniature portrayer of human likenesses. When Chaucer wrote, the classics of antiquity were imperfectly known in this country, — the Grecian Muse had never reached our shores: this was probably favorable to the native freedom of Chaucer. The English poet might have lost his raciness by a cold imitation of the Latin masters: among the Italians, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, Chaucer found only models to emulate or to surpass. Hence the English bard indulged that more congenial abundance of thoughts and images which owns no other rule than the pleasure it yields in the profusion of nature and fancy. A great poet may not be the less Homeric because he has never read Homer.

Nature, in her distinct forms, lies open before this poet-painter: his creative eye pursued her through all her mutability; but in his details he was a close copier. In his rural scenery, there is a freshness in its luxuriance; for his impressions were stamped by their locality. This locality is so remarkable, that Pope had a notion, which he said no one else had observed, that Chaucer always described real places to compliment the owners of particular gardens and fine buildings. Let us join him in his walks —

> "When that the misty vapour was agone,
> And clear and fair was the morning;
> The dews, like silver, shining
> Upon the leaves."

The flowers sparkle in "their divers hues" — he sometimes counts their colors, "white, blue, yellow, and red" — on their stalks, spreading their leaves in breadth against the sun, gold-burned. His grass is "so small, so thick, so fresh of hue!" The poet goes by a river whose water is "clear as beryl or crystal;" turning into "a little way towards a park in compass round, and by a small gate: —

> "Whoso that would freely might gone (go)
> Into this Park walled with green stone."

The owner of that park, probably, was startled when he came to "the little way" and to "the small gate." This was either the park of some great personage, or possibly Woodstock Park, where stood a stone lodge, so long known by the name of "Chaucer's House," that, in the days of Elizabeth, it was still described as such in the royal grant. If poets have rarely built houses, at least their names have consecrated many.

His —

> "Garden upon a river in a green mead,
> The gravel gold, the water pure as glass," —

and "the eglantine and sycamore arbor, so thickly woven, where the friers who stood without all day could not discover

whether any one was within," was assuredly some particular garden. The stately grove has all the characters of its trees, — the oak, the ash, and the fir, — to "the fresh hawthorn," —

> "Which in white motley that so swote doth smell."

In all these lovely scenes, there was a delicious sense of joyous existence: the inmates of the forest burst forth, from "the little conies, the beasts of gentle kind," to "the dreadful roe and the buck," and from their green leaves they who "with voice of angels" entranced the poet-musician: —

> "So loud they sang, that all the woodés rung
> Like as it should shiver in pieces small;
> And as methought that the Nightingale
> With so great might her voice out-wrest,
> Right as her heart for love would brest (burst)."

So true is the accidental remark of the celebrated Charles Fox, that, "of all poets, Chaucer seems to have been the fondest of the singing of birds." These were the peculiar delights in the poetic habits of Chaucer, who was an early riser, and often mused on many a rondel, in gardens and meads and woods, at earliest dawn. This poet's sunrisings are the most exhilarating in our poetry.

We may doubt if the vernal scenes of Chaucer can be partaken by his more chilly posterity. Did England, in the seasons of Chaucer, flourish with a more genial May and a more refulgent June? or should we suspect that the travelled poet clothed our soil with the luxuriance of Provençal fancy, and borrowed the clear azure of Italy to soften the British roughness even of our skies?

Tyrwhit, the able commentator of Chaucer, has thrown out an incidental remark, which seems equally refined and true: "Chaucer in his serious pieces often follows his author with the servility of a mere translator; and, in consequence, his narration is jejune and constrained (as often appears in the 'Romaunt of the Rose' and his translations of Dante); whereas in the comic he is generally satisfied with borrowing

a slight hint of his subject, which he varies, enlarges, and embellishes at pleasure, and gives the whole the air and color of an original; a sure sign that his genius rather led him to compositions of the latter kind."

This remark is an instance of critical sagacity. The creative faculty in Chaucer had not broken forth in his translations, which evidently were his earliest writings. The native bent of his genius, the hilarity of his temper, betrays itself by playful strokes of raillery and concealed satire when least expected. His fine irony may have sometimes left his commendations, or even the objects of his admiration, in a very ambiguous condition. The learned editor of the second part of the "Paston Letters" hence has been induced to infer, that the spirit of chivalry, from the reign of the third Edward, had entirely declined, and only existed in the forms of conventional and fashionable society, and had sunk into a mere foppery, a system of forms and etiquettes, because Chaucer, a court-poet, treats with irony the chivalric manners. Whether this ingenious inference will hold with literary antiquaries, I will not decide; but I am inclined to suspect that Chaucer's indulgence of his taste for irony was not in the mind of this learned editor. Our poet has stamped with his immortal ridicule the tale told in his own person, "the Rime of Sir Thopas," which is considered as a burlesque of the metrical romances. In those days, there was an inundation of these romances, as "the thirst and hunger" of the present is accommodated with as spurious a brood. We have our "drafty prose" as they had their "drafty riming." But shall we infer from this ludicrous effusion of the great poet, that he held so light the venerable fablers, the ancient romancers, with whose "better parts" he had nourished his own genius? This is his own confession. Often in his years of grief, when the poet wondered —

> "How he lived; for, day ne night,
> I may not sleep, —
> Sitting upright in my bed," —

then it was that he prescribed for his "secret sorrows" that medicine, which, "drunk deeply," makes us forget ourselves. In those hours the poet —

> "Bade one reach me a Boke,
> A Romance; and he it me took
> To read, and drive the Night away:
> For methought it better play
> Than play either at Chess or Tables."

And assuredly Chaucer found many passages in the old fablers not less entrancing than some of his own. Our poet indulged this vein of playful irony on persons as well as on things. A sly panegyric, sufficiently ambiguous for us to accept as a refined stroke, we find on the abstruse and interminable question of predestination; on which the Nonne's priest declares, —

> "But I ne cannot boult it to the bren,
> As can the holy doctor Augustín,
> Or Bœcé, or *the bishop Bradwardin.*"

As this bishop, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, was the first who treated theology on mathematical principles, and likewise wrote on the "Quadrature of the Circle," we may presume "Bishop Bradwardin" rather perplexed the poet. Chaucer discovers his ironical manner when gravely stating the different theories of dreaming: —

> "What causeth Suevenes*
> On the morrow or on evens?"

He playfully concludes, and modern philosophy could no better assist the inquiry: —

> "Whoso of these Miracles
> The causes know bet† than I,
> Define he; for I certainly
> Ne can them not, ne never thinke
> To busie my witte for to swinke
> To know why this is more than that is,

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* Dreams. † Better.

Well worthé of this thing Clerkés,
That treaten of this and of other werkés,
For I, of none opinion
Nil."

It is with the same pleasantry he avoids all commonplace descriptions by playfully suggesting his pretended unskilfulness for the detail, or his want of learning:—

"Me list not of the chaf, ne of the stre,
Maken so long a tale, as of the corn."
Man of Lawe's Tale.

Yet humor and irony are not his only excellences; for those who study Chaucer know that this great poet has thoughts that dissolve in tenderness: no one has more skilfully touched the more hidden springs of the heart.

The herculean labor of CHAUCER was the creation of a new style. In this he was as fortunate as he was likewise unhappy. He mingled, with the native rudeness of our English, words of Provençal fancy, and some of French and of Latin growth. He banished the superannuated and the uncouth, and softened the churlish nature of our hard Anglo-Saxon; but the poet had nearly endangered the novel diction when his artificial pedantry assumed what he called "the ornate style" in "the Romaunt of the Rose" and in his "Troilus and Cressida." This "ornate style" introduced sesquipedalian Latinisms, words of immense dimensions, that could not hide their vacuity of thought. Chaucer seems deserted by his genius when "the ornate style" betrays his pangs and his anxiety. As the error of a fine genius becomes the error of many, because monstrous protuberances may be copied, while the softened lines of beauty remain inimitable, this "ornate style" corrupted inferior writers, who, losing all relish of the natural feeling and graceful simplicity of their master, filled their verse with noise and nonsense. This vicious style, a century afterwards, was resumed by STEPHEN HAWES. We have, however, a glorious evidence, amid this

struggle both with a new and with a false style, of Chaucer's native good taste: he finally wholly abandoned this artificial diction; and his later productions, no longer disfigured by such tortured phrases and such remote words, awaken our sympathy in the familiar language of life and passion.

Tyrwhit has ingeniously constructed a metrical system to arrange the versification to the ear of a modern reader: by this contrivance he would have removed all obstructions in the pronunciation and in the syllabic quantities. He maintained that the lines were regular decasyllabics. But who can read this poet for any length, even the "Canterbury Tales" in the elaborated text of Tyrwhit, without being reminded of its fallacy? Even the *e* final, on which our critic has laid such stress, though often sounded, assuredly is sometimes mute. Dan Chaucer makes at his pleasure words long or short, and dissyllabic or trisyllabic; and this he has himself told us: —

> "But for the rime is light and lewde,
> Yet make it somewhat agreáble,
> Though some verse fail in a syllável."

Our critic was often puzzled by his own ingenuity; for in some inveterate cases he has thrown out in despair an observation, that "a reader who cannot perform such operations for himself (that is, helping out the metre) had better not trouble his head about the versification of our ancient authors." The verse of Chaucer seems more carefully regulated in his later work, "the Tales;" but it is evident that Chaucer trusted his cadences to his ear, and his verse is therefore usually rhythmical, and accidentally metrical.

On a particular occasion, the poet submitted to the restraint of equal syllables, as we discover in "the Court of Love," elaborately metrical, and addressed to "his princely lady," with the hope that she might not refuse it "for lack of ornate speech." It is evident, therefore, that Chaucer had a distinct conception of the heroic or decasyllabic verse; but he did

not consider that the mechanical construction of his verse was essential to the free spirit of his fancy. "I am no metrician," he once exclaimed: he wrote —

> "Books, songs, ditees
> In RIME, or else in CADENCE."
> *The House of Fame.*

This circumstance arose from the custom of the age, when poems were *recited*, and not *read:* readers there were none among the people, though auditors were never wanting; it was much the same among the higher orders. Poems were usually performed in plain chant, and a verse was musical by the modulation of the harp. There was no typographical metre placed under the eye of the reciter; the melody of the poet too often depended on the adroitness of the performer; and the only publishers of the popular poems of Chaucer were the harpers, who, in stately halls on festal days, entranced their audience with Chaucer's Tale, or his "Ballade." His poem of "Troilus and Cressida," although almost as long as the "Æneid," was intended to be *sung* to the harp as well as *read*, as the poet himself tells us, in addressing his poem, —

> "And *redde* where so thou be, or elles *sung*."

In the most ancient manuscripts of Chaucer's works, the cæsura in every line is carefully noted, to preserve the rhythmical cadence with precision: without this precaution, the harmony of such loose versification would be lost. In the later editions, when the race of roaming minstrels had departed, and our verse had become solely metrical, the printers omitted this guide to the ancient recitation. We perceive this want in the uncertain measures of Chaucer's versification; and a dexterous modulation is still required to catch the recitative of Chaucer's poems.

Are the works of our great poet to be consigned to the literary dungeon of the antiquary's closet? I fear that there is more than one obstruction which intervenes between the

poet's name, which will never die, and the poet's works, which will never be read. A massive tome, dark with the Gothic type, whose obsolete words and difficult phrases, and, for us, uncadenced metre, are to be conned by a glossary as obsolete as the text, to be perpetually referred to, to the interruption of all poetry and all patience, appalled even the thorough-paced antiquary, Samuel Pegge, as appears by his honest confession. Already a practised bibliosopher proclaims, alluding to the edition by Tyrwhit of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," "And who reads any other portion of the poet?" Yet the "Canterbury Tales" are but the smallest portion of Chaucer's works. But some skilful critics have perpended and decided differently: even among the projected labors of Johnson was an edition of Chaucer's works; and Godwin, when diligently occupied on this great poet, with just severity observed, that "a vulgar judgment had been propagated by slothful and indolent persons, that the 'Canterbury Tales' are the only part of the works of Chaucer worthy the attention of a modern reader; and this has contributed to the wretched state in which his works are permitted to exist."

Are we, then, no longer to linger over the visionary emotions of the great poet in the fine portraitures of his genius from his youthful days, when the fever of his soul, not knowing where to seek for its true aliment, careless of life, fed on its own sad musings, in Chaucer's "DREME;" or, onwards in life, in the "TESTAMENT OF LOVE," that chronicle of the heart in a prison solitude? And are we no longer interested in those personal traits Chaucer has so frequently dropped of his own tastes and humors, so that we are in fact better acquainted with Chaucer than we are with Shakspeare? Even during his official occupations, this poet loved his studious solitary nights, and frequently alludes to his passion. Must we close that "HOUSE OF FAME," with whose fragments Pope reared "the Temple"? Has all the enchantment of the moonlight-land of chivalry and fairyism in "THE FLOURE AND THE

Leafe" vanished? Are we no longer to listen to "the Complaint of the Black Knight," which touched a duchess or a queen? or the stanzas of "the Cuckoo and the Nightingale," which musically resound that musical encounter? Is the legend of pathetic tenderness in the impassioned "Troilus," and "the sillie woman who falsed Troilus," ever to be closed? — there may we pursue the vicissitudes of love, in what the poet calls "a little tragedy;" and we find Ovidian graces amid its utter simplicity. There are, indeed, vicissitudes of taste as well as of love. "Troilus and Cressida" was the favorite in the days of Henry VIII. over the "Canterbury Tales" and "the Floure and the Leafe;" it was, too, the model of Sidney in the court of Elizabeth: Love triumphed at court over Humor and Fancy.

It is true that the language of Chaucer has failed, but not the writer. The marble which Chaucer sculptured has betrayed the noble hand of the artist: the statue was finished; but the gray and spotty veins came forth, clouding the lucid whiteness.

For the poet or the poetical, the difficulty of the language may be surmounted with a reasonable portion of every-day patience. I know, from several of my literary contemporaries, that this, however, has not been conceded. The more familiar I became with Chaucer, the more I delighted in the significance of the Chaucerian words. From some modern critics, occasionally the name of Chaucer startles the ear. One, indeed, has recently complained that "Chaucer's divine qualities are languidly acknowledged by his unjust countrymen;"* and Coleridge emphatically said, "I take unceasing delight in Chaucer. His manly cheerfulness is especially delicious in my old age. How exquisitely tender he is!" †

But the popularity of this gifted child of Nature, and this shrewd observer of mankind, is doomed to another obstruction

* "Autobiography of an Opium-eater." — *Tait's Mag.*, August, 1835.

† Coleridge's "Table-talk"

than that of his curious diction. The playfulness of his comic invention, and the freedom of his simplicity, will no longer be allowed to atone for the levity of some of his incidents. When Warton, to display the genuine vein of the Chaucerian humor, imprudently analyzed the "Miller's Tale," having reached the middle, the critic, recollecting himself, suddenly breaks off with a curt remark, — "The sequel cannot be repeated here!" In a recklessness of all knowledge, and in an unhappy hour, the poet of "Don Juan" decided, while he probably would have started from Chaucer's black-letter tome, that "Chaucer, notwithstanding the praises bestowed on him, I think obscene and contemptible. He owed his celebrity merely to his antiquity." As if the greatest of our poets had only been celebrated in the day when Byron wrote! Yet, in all the unfettered invention and nudity of style, there was no grossness in the temper, and less in the habits, of the poet. He addressed his own age as his contemporaries were doing in France and in Italy, and from whom he had borrowed the very two tales on which this censure has fallen. In telling "a merrie tale," Chaucer could not have anticipated this charge; and, in truth, for subjects which are obscene and disgustful he had no taste, as he showed in his reproof of Gower for having selected two repulsive ones, — the unnatural passions of Canace, and Apollonius Tyrius. Of these our Chaucer cries, —

"Of all swiche cursed stories I say, Fy!"

Our poet has himself pleaded, that, having fixed on his personage, he had no choice to tell any other tale than what that individual would himself have told. Before we immolate Chaucer on the altar of the Graces, we should not only listen to his plea, but to his own easy remedy for this disorder produced by his too faithful copy after Nature: —

"Whoso list not to hear,
Turn over the leaf, and chese another tale!"

Our notions and our customs of delicacy are the result of a change in our manners, of no distant period; and, compared with our neighbors, many are still but conventional. They are so even in respect to ourselves; for, not to go back to the golden days of Elizabeth, the language and the manners of the court of Anne would have startled modern decorum. The "polite conversation" of Swift has fortunately preserved for us specimens which we could not have imagined. Our poems, our comedies, and our tales, so late as the days of Swift and Pope, have allusions, and even incidents and descriptions, which we no longer tolerate. How far our fastidiousness lies on the surface of our lesser morals, I will not decide; but men of genius have complained that this fastidiousness has become too restrictive, by contracting the sphere of inventive humor, which flashes often in such small matters as ludicrous tales and playful levities, which must not lie on our tables.

Chaucer long remained a favorite in the most polite circles: Aubrey, at the close of the seventeenth century, in his "Idea," recommends the study of Chaucer, as the poet in full reputation. At a later period, the days of Dryden and Pope, our versifiers were continually renovating his humor and his more elegant fictions. Ogle, with others, attempted to modernize Chaucer; but it is as impossible to give such a version of Chaucer as to translate the Odes of Horace. They corrupted by their interpolations, and weakened by their diffusion: Chaucer was not discernible in the dimness of their paraphrase. The great beauties of Chaucer spring up from the soil in which they lie embedded; and the most skilful hand will discover, that, in gathering the flower, it must cease to live without its root.

We never possessed a tolerably correct edition of this master-poet; and the very circumstance of the continued popularity of the poems with the many has occasioned their present wretched condition. When works circulated in their manuscript state, before the era of printing, the popularity of a

poet made his text the more liable to corruption. Multiplied transcripts were produced by heedless or licentious scribes, whose careless omissions and whose perpetuated blunders, and even interpolations, can only be credited by the collators of the manuscripts of Chaucer. This happened with the very first printed edition by Caxton. Our patriarchal publisher discovered that he had printed from a very faulty manuscript; and, in that primitive age of simplicity and printing, nobly suppressed the edition which dishonored the author, and substituted an improved one. Doubtless GOWER, a grave and learned poet, whose copies are remarkably elegant, has descended to us in a purer condition than CHAUCER; for he was rarely transcribed. Speght was the first editor who gave a more complete edition of Chaucer, with the useful appendage of a glossary, the first of its kind, and which has been a fortunate acquisition for later glossographers. But Speght, with the aid of Stowe, who was equally industrious, was so deficient in critical acumen as to have impounded any stray on the common stamped with the initials of Chaucer. Thus our poet has suffered all the mischances of faithless scribes, unintelligent printers, and uncritical editors. To make the bad worse, the last modern edition of Chaucer, by URRY, though recommended by the white letter, offering this bland relief to a modern reader, is a showy volume, of which we are forbidden to read a line! The history of this edition is an evidence how ill our scholars, at no remote period, were qualified to decide on the fate of a great vernacular author. Urry, the pupil of Dean Aldrich and the friend of Bishop Atterbury, appears to have been one of that galaxy or confederacy of wits called "the wits of Christ Church." The "student of Christ Church, Oxon," offered a title and a place which would sanction an edition of Chaucer; one object of which was to contribute five hundred pounds to finish Peckwater Quadrangle. The pompous folio appeared heralded by the queen's license for the exclusive sale for fourteen years. Our editor at first

seems to have been reluctant and modest, till instigated by his great patrons to divest himself of all fear of the author. In his innocence conceiving that the strokes of his own pen would silently improve an obsolete genius, this merciless interpolator, changing words and syllables at pleasure, has furnished a text which Chaucer never wrote!* If the worst edition that was ever published contributed to finish Peckwater Quadrangle, it is amusing to be reminded that causes are often strangely disproportionate to their effects.

The famous portion of Chaucer's Miscellaneous Volume has been fortunate in the editorial cares of TYRWHIT. Tyrwhit, a scholar as well as an antiquary, was an expert philologer: his extensive reading in the lore of our vernacular literature and our national antiquities promptly supplied what could not have entered into his more classical studies; and his sagacity seems to have decided on the various readings of all the manuscripts by piercing into the core of the poet's thoughts.†

It is remarkable that some of the most lively productions

* So unskilful or so incurious was Warburton in the language of our ancient poets, that, in his notes on Pope, he quotes the following lines of Chaucer, —

"Love wol not be *constreined* by maistrie.
Whan maistrie cometh, the *God* of love anon
Beteth his wings, and *farewel*, he is gon," —

from Urry's edition, in which they appear thus transformed and corrupted: —

"Love will not be *confined* by maisterie.
When maisterie comes, the *Lord* of love anon
Flutters his wings, and *forthwith* is he gone."

[An excellent example of the superior vigor of Chaucer may be seen in an original passage of his "Palamon and Arcite," contrasted with Dryden's tamer modernization of the same, in "Curiosities of Literature," vol. ii. p. 277. — ED.]

† This "sagacity" has been much and justly questioned by the more advanced students of mediæval literature. Sir Harris Nicolas has produced an excellent edition of the poet; but the best text of the "Canterbury Tales" has been published by Mr. Thomas Wright, from a careful collation of the oldest manuscript. — ED.

of several great writers have been the work of their maturest age. Johnson surpassed all his preceding labors in his last work, the popular "Lives of the Poets." The "Canterbury Tales" of Chaucer were the effusions of his advanced age, and the congenial verses of Dryden were thrown out in the luxuriance of his later days. Milton might have been classed among the minor poets, had he not lived to be old enough to become the most sublime. Let it be a source of consolation, if not of triumph, in a long studious life of true genius, to know that the imagination may not decline with the vigor of the frame which holds it: there has been no old age for many men of genius.

We must lament, that, at such an early period in our vernacular literature, we have to record that the two fathers of our poetry, congenial spirits as they were, too closely resembled most of their sons in one of the most painful infirmities of genius. I have said elsewhere, that jealousy, long supposed to be the offspring of little minds, is not, however, confined to them. We do not possess the secret history of the two great poets, Chaucer and Gower; but we are told by Berthelet in his edition of Gower's "Confessio Amantis," when he quotes the commendatory lines on Gower by Chaucer, that the poets "were both excellently learned, *both great friendes together.*" Ancient biographers usually fall into this vague style of eulogy, which served their purpose rather than a more critical research. True it is, that "they were both great friends;" but, what Berthelet has not told, they became also "both great enemies." We know that Chaucer has commemorated the dignified merits of "the moral Gower," and that Gower has poured forth an effusion not less fervid than elegant from the lips of Venus, who calls Chaucer "her own clerk, who in the flower of his youth had made ditees and songes glad which have filled the land." Did this little passion of poetic jealousy creep into their great souls? — else how did it happen that Chaucer, who had once solicited the cor-

recting hand of his friend in his latest work, reprehended the sage and the poet; and that Gower, who had not stinted the rich meed of his eulogy which appeared in the first copies of his "Confessio Amantis," erased the immortality which he had bestowed? The justice of their reciprocal praise neither of these rivals could efface; for that outlives their little jealousies.

GOWER.

In the Church of St. Saviour in Southwark may be viewed an ancient monument with its sculptured and Gothic canopy: pictured on its side, the three visionary virgins, Charity, Mercy, and Pity, solicit the prayer of the passenger for the soul of the suppliant whose image lies extended on the tomb, with folded hands, and in his damask habit flowing to his feet. His head reposes on three mighty tomes, and is decked with a garland, either of roses which proclaim his knighthood, or the wreath of literature which would more justly distinguish the wearer, — John Gower, the poet.

In the life of this poet, almost the only certain incident seems to be his sepulchral monument: and even this it had been necessary to repair after the malignity of the iconoclasts; and, of the three sculptured volumes which support the poet's head, a single one only has been opened by the world; for the tomb has perpetuated what the press has not.

The three tomes on the tomb of Gower represent his three great works; but what is remarkable, and shows the unsettled state of our literature, each of these great works is written in a different language, though equally graced with Latin titles. The first, in French, is the "Speculum Meditantis;" the moral reflections relieved by historical examples. The second, in Latin verse, is "Vox Clamantis:" this "Voice" comes not from the desert, for it is that of the clamors of the people; a satire on all ranks, and an exhortation to the youthful monarch to check his own self-indulgence. It includes a chronicle of the insurrection of the populace, or "the clowns," as they

were called in Richard the Second's reign. The vernacular style, rather than Latin verse, would have more aptly celebrated the feats of Wat Tyler, or Bet and Sim, Gibbe and Hyke, Hudde and Judde, Jack and Tib. The reporter had no doubt been present at the active scene. The swarm rush on to the call of one another, in hexameters and pentameters. The singularity of the subject, which gives no bad picture of the hurry of a disorderly mob and the felicity of an old translation, induce me to preserve a partial extract from the manuscript. Our own age has witnessed similar scenes.

"Watte vocat, cui Thome venit, neque Symme retardat,
Betteque, Gibbe simul Hyke venire jubent.
Colle furit, quem Gibbe juvat nocumenta parantes,
Cum quibus ad dampnum Wille coire vovet.
Grigge rapit, dum Dawe strepit, comes est quibus Hobbe,
Lorkin et in medio non minor esse putat.
Hudde ferit, quos Judde terit, dum Tebbe juvatur,
Jacke domos que viros vellit, et ense necat."

"Tom comes thereat, when called by Wat; and Simon as forward we find;
Bet calls as quick to Gibb and to Hyck, that neither would tarry behinde.
Gibbe, a good whelp of that litter, doth help mad Coll more mischief to do;
And Will he doth vow, the time is come now, he'll join with their company too.
Davie complains whiles Grigg gets the gains, and Hobb with them doth partake;
Lorkin aloud, in the midst of the crowd, conceiveth as deep is his stake.
Hudde doth spoil whom Judde doth foile, and Tebbe lends his helping hand;
But Jack, the mad-patch, men and horses doth snatch, and kills all at his command."

The third and greater work, and the only printed one of Gower, is the "Confessio Amantis," an English poem of about thirty thousand lines; a singular miscellany of allegory, of morality, and of tales. It is studded with sententious maxims and proverbs, and richly diversified with narrations, pleasant and tragic; but the affectation of learning — for learning in its crude state always obtrudes itself, even in works of recreation — has compressed the Aristotelian philosophy, to edify

and surprise the readers of the poet's fairy or romantic tales. Robert de Brunne, to illustrate monachal morals, interspersed domestic stories; and, amidst the prevalent penury of imagination, that rhyming monk affords the most ancient specimens of English tales in verse: and as Gower's single printed work is of the same species of composition, a system of ethics illustrated by tales, it has been thought that the monk who rhymed in 1300 was the true predecessor of the poet who flourished at the close of that century, however Gower may have purified the "rime doggrel" and elevated the puerile tale. The straw-roof must be raised before the cupola. Genius in its genealogy must not blush at its remote ancestor: the noblest knight may often go back to the mill or the forge. If this rude moralizing rhymer really be the poetical father of Gower, then is this antiquated monk the inventor of that narrative poetry which Chaucer, Spenser, Dryden, and even some of our contemporaries, have so delightfully diversified. But story-telling has been of all periods.

There is a portion in this volume which concerns the personal history of the poet.

This work was composed at the suggestion of Richard the Second himself, who among other luxuries loved Froissart's romance and Chaucer's rhymes, and was even willing to be taught the grave lessons which he could not practise. As Gower one day was rowed in his boat on the Thames, he met his "liege lord" in the royal barge, who commanded the poet to enter, and, in a long unrestrained conversation, desired him "to book some new thing in the way he was used." Probably the youthful monarch alluded to the "Vox Clamantis," in which the poet had exhorted his "liege lord" to exercise every kingly virtue, and had without reserve touched on too many imperfections of a court-life. It was to be "a book," added the young monarch, "in which he himself might often look." The poet aspired to fix the honor which he had received, and resolved, in his own words,—

"To write in such a manner-wise,
Which may be wisdom to the wise,
And play to them that list to play."

In a word, we have here the great Horatian precept by the intuition of our earliest poet.

The political admonitions, and the keen satire on the youthful favorites of the youthful monarch of a luxurious court, and the relaxed morals of the higher ranks, the clergy, and the judges, were all offered with more than the freedom of a poet: they sound the deep tones of the patriot. The sage had solemnly contemplated on the discontents and clamors of the people, and presciently observed the rising of that state-tempest which in an instant dethroned this magnificent and thoughtless prince.

In the course of the reign of Richard the Second, it appears that several alterations were made in the poem. The dedicatory preface was suppressed. Berthelet, the ancient printer of the "Confessio Amantis," discovered that "the prologue" had disappeared, though the same number of lines were substituted, "cleane contrary both in sentence and in meaning." Gower has therefore incurred the reproach of a disloyal desertion of his hapless master to court a successful usurper. One critic tells that "he was given to change with the turns of state." Bishop Nicholson, with dull levity, has a fling at all poets, for he censures Gower for "making too free with his prince, — a liberty, it seems, allowed to men of his profession;" while Thomas Hearne, the blind bigot of passive obedience, in editing a monkish life of Richard the Second, would have all Gower condemned to oblivion, because "he had treated the monarch's memory ill, and spoke with equal freedom of the clergy." This vacillating conduct of "the moral Gower," however, need not leave any stain on his memory. We see he had never at any time adulated the youthful monarch: however his tales may have charmed the royal ear, the verse often left behind a wholesome bitterness.

Gower had praised Henry of Lancaster at a period when he could not have contemplated the change of dynasty; and, when it happened, the poet was of an age far too advanced either to partake of the hopes or the fears that wait on a new reign.

But this tale of Gower's free and honest satire on courts and courtiers is not yet concluded. The sphere of a poet's influence is far wider than that of his own age; and, however we may now deem of this grave and ancient poet, he still found understanding admirers so late as in the reign of Charles the First. In the curious "Conference" which took place when Charles the First visited the Marquess of Worcester, at Ragland Castle, with his court, there is the following anecdote respecting the poet Gower.

The marquess was a shrewd though whimsical man, and a favorite of the king for his frankness and his love of the arts. His lordship entertained the royal guest with extraordinary magnificence. Among his rare curiosities was a sumptuous copy of Gower's volume.

Charles the First usually visited the marquess after dinner. Once he found his lordship with the book of John Gower lying open, which the king said he had never before seen. "Oh!" exclaimed the marquess; "it is a book of books! and, if your majesty had been well versed in it, it would have made you a king of kings."—"Why so, my lord?"—"Why, here is set down how Aristotle brought up and instructed Alexander the Great in all the rudiments and principles belonging to a prince." And, under the persons of Aristotle and Alexander, the marquess read the king such a lesson, that all the standers-by were amazed at his boldness.

The king asked whether he had his lesson by heart, or spake out of the book. "Sir, if you would read my heart, it may be that you might find it there; or, if your majesty pleased to get it by heart, I will lend you my book." The king accepted the offer.

Some of the new-made lords fretted, and bit their thumbs, at certain passages in the marquess's discourse; and some protested that no man was so much for the absolute power of a king as Aristotle. The marquess told the king that he would indeed show him one remarkable passage to that purpose; and, turning to the place, read:—

> "A king can kill; a king can save;
> A king can make a lord a knave;
> And, of a knave, a lord also."

On this several new-made lords slank out of the room; which the king observing, told the marquess, "My lord, at this rate, you will drive away all my nobility."

This amusing anecdote is an evidence that this ethical poet, after two centuries and a half, was not forgotten: his spirit was still vital, his volume still lay open on the library-table; it afforded a pungent lesson to the courtiers of Charles the First, as it had to those of Richard the Second.

Gower was learned, didactic, and dignified. The manuscripts of his works are usually noble and sumptuous copies; more elegantly written and more richly illuminated than the works of other poets. His commonplaces and his legendary lore seem to have awed the simplicity of the readers of two centuries, whose taste did not yet feel that failure of the poet who narrated a fable from Ovid with the dull prolixity of a matter-of-fact chronicler. His fictions are rarely imaginative; yet critics, far abler judges of his relative merits than ourselves, since they lived within the sphere of his influence, hailed this grave father of our poesy. Leland, the royal antiquary of Henry the Eighth, expressed his ideas with great elegance and sensibility when he said of Gower, that "his diligent culture of our poesy had extirpated the ordinary herbs, and that the soft violet and the purple narcissus were now growing where erst was nothing seen but the thistle and the thorn." There are, indeed, some graceful flowers in his desert. But all criticism is usually relative to the age, and

excellence is always comparative. GOWER stamped with the force of ethical reasoning his smooth rhymes; and this was a near approach to poetry itself. If in the mind of CHAUCER we are more sensible of the impulses of genius, — those creative and fugitive touches, — his diction is more mixed and unsettled than the tranquil elegance of GOWER, who has often many pointed sentences and a surprising neatness of phrase. A modern reader, I think, would find the style of Gower more easily intelligible than the higher efforts of the more inventive poet.

PIERS PLOUGHMAN.

CONTEMPORARY with GOWER and CHAUCER lived the singular author of "the Visions of William concerning PIERS PLOUGHMAN;" singular in more respects than one, for his subject, his style, and, we may add, for the intrepidity and the force of his genius.

This extraordinary work is ascribed to one whose name is merely traditional, — to Robert Langland, a secular priest of Salop: when he wrote, and where he died, are as dubious as his text, the authenticity of which is often uncertain from the variations in all the manuscripts. But the real life of an author, at least for posterity, lies beyond the grave; and no writer is nameless whose volume has descended to us as one of the most memorable in our ancient vernacular literature.

In character, in execution, and in design, "the Visions of William of PIERS PLOUGHMAN" are wholly separated from the polished poems of GOWER and CHAUCER; the work bears no trace of their manner, nor of their refinement, nor of their versification; and it has baffled conjectural criticism to assign the exact period of a composition which appears more ancient than any supposed contemporary writings. Those who would decide of the time in which an author wrote by his style, here are at a loss to conceive that the splendid era of romantic chivalry, the age of Edward the Third and his grandson, which produced the curious learning and the easy rhymes of the "Confessio Amantis" and the pleasantry and the fine discriminations of character of the "Canterbury Tales," could have given birth to the antiquated Saxon and

rustic pith of this genuine English bard. Either his labor was concluded ere the writings of the court-poets had travelled to our obscure country priest in his seclusion in a distant county, or else he disdained their exotic fancies, their Latinisms, their Gallicisms, and their Italianisms, and their trivial rhymes, that in every respect he might remain their astonishing contrast, with no inferiority of genius. There was no philosophical criticism in the censure of this poet by Warton, when he condemns him for not having "availed himself of the rising and rapid improvements of the English language," and censures him for his "affectation of obsolete English." These rising improvements may never have reached our bard, or, if they had, he might have disdained them; for the writer of the "Visions concerning Piers Ploughman" was strictly a national poet: and there was no "affectation of obsolete English" in a poet preserving the forms of his native idiom, and avoiding all exotic novelties in the energy of his Anglo-Saxon genius. His uncontaminated mind returned to or continued the Anglo-Saxon alliterative metre and unrhymed verse: he trusted its cadence to the ear, scorning the subjection of rhyme. WEBBE, a critic of the age of Elizabeth, considered this poet as "the first who had observed the quantity of our verse without the curiosity of rhyme."

It is useless to give the skeleton of a desultory and tedious allegorical narrative. The last editor, Dr. Whitaker, imagined that "he for the first time had shown that it was written after a regular and consistent design;" notwithstanding that he himself confesses that "the conclusion is singularly cold and comfortless, and *leaves the inquirer, after a long peregrination, still remote from the object of his search*,"—a conclusion where nothing is concluded! The visionist might have been overtaken by sleep among the bushes of the Malvern Hills for twenty cantos more, without at all deranging any thing which he had said, or inconveniencing any thing which he might say. In truth, it is a heap of rhapsodies, without any artifice of

connection or involution of plot, or any sustained interest of one actor more than another among the numerous ideal beings who flit along the dreamy scenes.

The true spirit of this imaginative work is more comprehensible than any settled design. That mysterious or mythical personage, "Piers Ploughman," is the representative of "the Universal Church," says Dr. Whitaker; or "Christian life," says Mr. Campbell. What he may be is very doubtful; for we have "True Religion," a fair lady, who puts in surely a higher claim to represent "the Universal Church" or "Christian life" than "the Ploughman," who has to till his half-acre, and save his idling companions from "waste" and "wane." The most important personage is "Mede," or bribery, who seems to exert an extraordinary influence over the Bench and the Bar and the Church, and through every profession which occurred to the poet.

The pearls in these waters lie not on the surface. The visionist had deeper thoughts and more concealed feelings than these rhapsodical phantoms. In a general survey of society, he contemplates on the court and the clergy, glancing through all the diversified ranks of the laity; not sparing the people themselves, as their awful reprover. It was a voice from the wilderness in the language of the people. The children of want and oppression had found their solitary advocate. The prelacy, dissolved in the luxuriousness of papal pomp, and a barbarous aristocracy, with their rapacious dependants, were mindless of the morals or the happiness of those human herds, whose heads were counted, but whose hearts they could never call their own.

We are curious to learn, in this disordered state of the Commonwealth, the political opinions entertained by this sage. They are as mysterious as Piers Ploughman himself.

Passive obedience to the higher powers is inculcated apparently rather for its prudence than its duty. This we infer from his lively parable of "the Cat of a Court," and "a Route

of Ratones and Small Mice." "Grimalkin, though sometimes apt to play the tyrant when appetite was sharp, would often come laughing and leaping among them. A rat, a whisker of renown, cunningly proposed to adorn the cat with an ornament, like those which great lords use who wear chains and collars about their necks: it should be a tinkling bell, which, if cats would fancy the fashion, would warn us of their approach. We might then in security be all lords ourselves, and not be in this misery of creeping under benches. But not a raton of the whole rout, for the realm of France, or to win all England, would bind the bell round the imperial neck. A mouseling, who did not much like rats, concluded, that if they should even kill the cat, then there would come another to crunch us and our kind; for men will not have their meal nibbled by us mice, nor their nights disturbed by the clattering of roystering rats. Better for us to let the cat alone! My old father said a kitten was worse. The cat never hurt me: when he is in good humor, I like him well; and, by my counsel, cat nor kitten shall be grieved. I will suffer, and say nothing. The beast who now chastiseth many may be amended by misfortune. Are the rats to be our governors? I tell ye, we would not rule ourselves!" The poet adds, "What this means, ye men who love mirth, interpret for me; for I dare not!"

The parable seems sufficiently obvious. The ratons represent a haughty aristocracy; and "the small mouse" is one of the people themselves, who in his mouse-like wisdom preferred a single sovereign to many lords. But the poet's own reflection, addressed to "the men of mirth," seems enigmatic. Is he indulging a secret laugh at the passive obedience of the prudential mouse?

Our author's indignant spirit, indeed, is vehemently democratic. He dared to write what many trembled to whisper. Genius reflects the suppressed feelings of its age. It was a stirring epoch. The spirit of inquisition had gone forth in

the person of Wickliffe; and, wherever a Wickliffe appears, as surely will there be a Piers Ploughman. When a great precursor of novel opinions arises, it is the men of genius in seclusion who think and write.

But our country priest, in his contemplative mood, was not less remarkable for his prudence than for his bold freedom, aware that the most corrupt would be the most vindictive. The implacable ecclesiastics, by the dread discipline of the Church, would doom the apostle of humanity, but the apostate of his order, to perpetual silence by the spell of an anathema; and the haughty noble would crush his victim by the iron arm of his own or of the civil power. The day had not yet arrived when the great were to endure the freedom of reprehension. The sage, the satirist, and the seer (for prophet he proved to be) veiled his head in allegory: he published no other names than those of the virtues and the vices; and, to avoid personality, he contented himself with personification.

A voluminous allegory is the rudest and the most insupportable of all poetic fictions: it originates in an early period of society, when its circles are contracted and isolated, and the poet is more conversant with the passions of mankind than with individuals. A genius of the highest order alone could lead us through a single perusal of such a poem, by the charm of vivifying details, which enables us to forget the allegory altogether,—the tedious drama of nonentities or abstract beings. In such creative touches the author of Piers Ploughman displays pictures of domestic life with the minute fidelity of a Flemish painting, so veracious is his simplicity. He is a great satirist, touching with caustic invective or keen irony public abuses and private vices; but in the depth of his emotions, and in the wildness of his imagination, he breaks forth in the solemn tones and with the sombre majesty of Dante.

But this rude native genius was profound as he was sagacious, and his philosophy terminated in prophecy. At the

era of the Reformation, they were startled by the discovery of an unknown writer, who, two centuries preceding that awful change, had predicted *the fate of the religious houses from the hand of a king.* The visionary seer seems to have fallen on the principle which led Erasmus to predict that "*those who were in power*" would seize on the rich shrines, because *no other class of men* in society could mate with so mighty a body as the monks. Power only could accomplish that great purpose, and hence our vaticinator fixed on the highest as the most likely; and the deep foresight of an obscure country priest, which required two centuries to be verified, became a great moral and political prediction.

Without, however, depreciating the sagacity of the predictor, there is reason to suspect that the same thought was occurring to some of the great themselves. The Reformation of Henry the Eighth may be dated from the reign of Richard the Second. That mighty transition into a new order of events in our history would then have occurred; for the stag was started, and the hunt was up. It was an accidental and unexpected circumstance which turned aside the impending event, which was to be future, and not immediate. Henry Bolingbroke, in the early part of his life, seems to have entertained some free opinions respecting the property of the Church. He seemed not unfavorable to Wickliffe's doctrines, and, when Earl of Derby, once declared that "princes had too little, and religious houses too much." This unguarded expression, which was not to be forgotten, we are told, occasioned one of the rebellions during his reign. But, when Henry Bolingbroke usurped the throne, age and prudence might have come together: the monarch balanced the dread of a turbulent aristocracy, and the uncertain tenure of dominion to be held at their pleasure, against the security of sheltering the throne under the broad alliance of a potent prelacy, — a potent prelacy whose doom was fixed, though the hour had not yet struck. The monarch affixed a bloody seal

to this political convention by granting a statute which made the offence of heresy capital; a crime which heretofore in law was as unknown as it seemed impossible to designate, and described only in figurative terms, as something very alarming, but which any prudent heretic might easily, if not explain, at least recant. To give it more solemnity, the statute is delivered in Latin; and the punishment of burning was to be inflicted *corum populo, in eminente loco.*"*

The "Visions of Piers Ploughman," when the day which his prescience anticipated arrived, were eagerly received: it is said the work passed through three editions in one year, about 1550, in the reign of the youthful monarch of the Reformation. The readers at that early period of printing would find many passages congenial to the popular sentiments, and our nameless author was placed among the founders of a new era.

The "VISIONS OF PIERS PLOUGHMAN" will always offer studies for the poetical artist. This volume, and not Gower's nor Chaucer's, is a well of English undefiled. SPENSER often beheld these Visions; MILTON, in his sublime description of the Lazar House, was surely inspired by a reminiscence of Piers Ploughman. Even DRYDEN, whom we should not suspect to be much addicted to black-letter reading beyond his Chaucer, must have carefully conned our Piers Ploughman; for he has borrowed one very striking line from our poet, and possibly may have taken others. BYRON, though he has thrown out a crude opinion of Chaucer, has declared that "the Ploughman" excels our ancient poets. And I am inclined to think that we owe to Piers Ploughman an allegorical work of the same wild invention, from that other creative mind, the author of the "Pilgrim's Progress." How can we think of the one, without being reminded of the other? Some distant relationship seems to exist between the Ploughman's

* Barrington's "Observations on the more ancient Statutes."

Dowell and *Dobet*, and *Dobest*, Friar *Flatterer*, *Grace* the portress of the magnificent Tower of *Truth* viewed at a distance, and by its side the dungeon of *Care*, *Natural Understanding*, and his lean and stern wife *Study*, and all the rest of this numerous company, and the shadowy pilgrimage of the "Immortal Dreamer" to "the Celestial City." Yet I would mistrust my own feeling, when so many able critics, in their various researches after a prototype of that singular production, have hitherto not suggested what seems to me obvious.*

Why our rustic bard selected the character of a ploughman as the personage adapted to convey to us his theological mysteries, we know not precisely to ascertain; but it probably occurred as a companion fitted to the humbler condition of the apostles themselves. Such, however, was the power of the genius of this writer, that his successors were content to look for no one of a higher class to personify their solemn themes. Hence we have "the Crede of Piers Ploughman;" "the Prayer and Complaint of the Ploughman;" "the Ploughman's Tale," inserted in Chaucer's volume; all being equally directed against the vicious clergy of the day.

* For the general reader, I fear that "The Visions of Piers Ploughman" must remain a sealed book. The last edition of Dr. WHITAKER, the most magnificent and frightful volume that was ever beheld in the black-letter, was edited by one whose delicacy of taste unfitted him for this homely task: the plain freedom of the vigorous language is sometimes castrated, with a faulty paraphrase and a slender glossary; and passages are slurred over with an annihilating &c. Much was expected from this splendid edition: the subscription-price was quadrupled, and on its publication every one would rid himself of the mutilated author. The editor has not assisted the reader through his barbarous text interspersed with Saxon characters and abbreviations, and the difficulties of an obscure and elliptical phraseology in a very antiquated language. Should ever a new edition appear, the perusal would be facilitated by printing with the white-letter. There is an excellent specimen for an improved text and edition in "Gent. Mag.," April, 1834. [This improved text of the "Vision" and "Crede" has, since this note was originally written, been published with notes by T. Wright, M.A.; and has been again reprinted recently.]

"The Crede of Piers Ploughman," if not written by the author of the "Vision," is at least written by a scholar who fully emulates his master; and Pope was so deeply struck with this little poem, that he has very carefully analyzed the whole.

OCCLEVE, THE SCHOLAR OF CHAUCER.

WARTON passed sentence on OCCLEVE as "a cold genius and a feeble writer." A literary antiquary, from a manuscript in his possession, published six poems of Occleve; but that selection was limited to the sole purpose of furnishing the personal history of the author.* Ritson's sharp snarl pronounced that they were of "peculiar stupidity;" George Ellis refused to give "a specimen;" and Mr. Hallam, with his recollection of the critical brotherhood, has decreed, that "the poetry of Occleve is wretchedly bad, abounding with pedantry, and destitute of grace or spirit." We could hardly expect to have heard any more of this doomed victim, — this ancient man, born in the fourteenth century, standing before us, whose dry bones will ill bear all this shaking and cuffing.

A literary historian, who has read manuscripts with the eagerness which others do the last novelty, more careful than Warton, and more discriminate than Ritson, has, with honest intrepidity, confessed that "OCCLEVE has not had his just share of reputation. His writings greatly assisted the growth of the popularity of our infant poetry."† Our historian has

* "*Poems by* THOMAS HOCCLEVE, *never before printed, selected from a manuscript in the possession of George Mason, with a preface, notes, and glossary,*" 1796. The notes are not amiss, and the glossary is valuable; but the verses printed by Mason are his least interesting productions. The poet's name is here written with an H, as it appeared in the manuscript; but there is no need of a modern editor changing the usual mode, because names were diversely written or spelt even in much later times. The present writer has been called not only *Occleve*, but *Occliffe*, as we find him in Chaucer's works.

† Turner's "History of England," v. 335.

furnished from the manuscripts of Occleve testimonies of his assertion.

Among the six poems printed, one of considerable length exhibits the habits of a dissipated young gentleman in the fourteenth century.

Occleve for more than twenty years was a writer in the Privy Seal, where we find quarter-days were most irregular; and though briberies constantly flowed in, yet the golden shower passed over the heads of the clerks, dropping nothing into the hands of these innocents.

Our poet, in his usual passage from his "Chestres Inn by the Strond" to "Westminster Gate," by land or water, — for "in the winter the way was deep," and "the Strand" was then what its name indicates, — often was delayed by —

> "The outward signe of Bacchus and his lure,
> That at his dore hangeth day by day,
> Exciteth Folk to taste of his moistúre,
> So often that they cannot well say Nay!"

There was another invitation for this susceptible writer of the Privy Seal.

> "I dare not tell how that the fresh repaír
> Of Venus femel, lusty children dear,
> That so goodlý, so shapely were, and fair,
> And so pleasánt of port and of manére."

There he loitered —

> "To talk of mirth, and to disport and play."

He never "pinched" the taverners, the cooks, the boatmen, and all such gentry.

> "Among this many in mine audience,
> Methought I was ymade a man for ever;
> So tickled me that nyce reverénce,
> That it me made larger of dispence:
> For Riot payeth largely ever mo;
> He stinteth never till his purse be bare."

He is at length seized amid his jollities: —

"By force of the penniless maladíe,
Ne lust * had none to Bacchus House to hie.
Fy! lack of coin departeth compaignie;
And hevé purse with Herté liberál
Quencheth the thirsty heat of Hertés drie,
Where chinchy Herté † hath thereof but small."

This "mirror of riot and excess" effected a discovery; and it was, that all the mischiefs which he recounts came from the high reports of himself which servants bring to their lord. The Losengour or pleasant flatterer was too lightly believed, and honeyed words made more harmful the deceitful error. "O babbling flattery!" he spiritedly exclaims, "author of all lyes, that causest all day thy lord to fare amiss." Such is the import of the following uncouth verse:—

"Many a servant unto his Lord saith
That all the world speaketh of him Honoúr,
When the contrarie of that is sooth in faith;
And lightly leeved is this Losengoúr,‡
His hony wordés wrapped in Erroúr,
Blindly conceived been, the more harm is.
O thou, FAVELE, of lesynges auctoúr,§
Causest all day thy Lord to fare amiss.
The Combre worldés‖ 'clept been Enchantoúrs
In Bookes, as I have red."

OCCLEVE was a shrewd observer of his own times. That this rhymer was even a playful painter of society, we have a remarkable evidence preserved in the volume of his great

* No desire. † Niggardly heart.

‡ A Chaucerian word, which well deserves preservation in the language.

§ FAVELL, author of "Lyes." FAVELL the editor of Hoccleve explains as *cajolerie*, or flattery, by words given by Carpentier in his supplement to "Du Cange." Favel is personified by "Piers Ploughman," and in Skelton's "Bouge of Court." FAVELE, in langue Romane, is Flattery: hence *Fabel*, Fabling.—ROQUEFORT'S *Dictionnaire*. The Italian FAVELLIO, *parlerie*, *babil*, *caquet*,—Alberti's "Grand Dictionnaire,"—does not wholly convey the idea of our modern *Humbug*, which combines *fabling* and *caquet*.

‖ The encumbrances to the world. In another poem he calls death "that Coimbre-world." It was a favorite expression with him, taken from Chaucer.—See "Warton," ii. 352, note.

master. "The Letter of Cupid," in the works of Chaucer, was the production of Occleve, and appears to have been overlooked by his modern critics. He had originally entitled it, "A Treatise of the Conversation of Men and Women in the Little Island of Albion." It is a caustic "polite conversation," and deemed so execrably good, as to have excited, as our ancient critic Speght tells, "such hatred among the gentlewomen of the Court, that Occleve was forced to recant in that boke of his called 'Planetas Proprius.'" * The Letter of Cupid is thus dated:—

> "Written in the lusty month of May,
> In our Paléis, where many a millión
> Of lovers true have habitatión;
> The yere of grace joyfull and jocúnd,
> A thousand four hundred and secónd."

Imagery and imagination are not required in the school of society. Occleve seems, however, sometimes to have told tale not amiss; for WILLIAM BROWN, the pastoral bard, inserted entire a long story by old Occleve in his "Shepherd's Pipe." To us he remains sufficiently uncouth. The language had not at this period acquired even a syntax; though, with all its rudeness, it was neither wanting in energy nor copiousness, from that adoption of the French, the Provençal, and the Italian, with which Chaucer had enriched his vein. The present writer seems to have had some notions of the critical art: for he requests the learned tutor of Prince Edward, afterwards Edward the Fourth, to warn him when—

> "Metring amiss;"—

and when—

> "He speaks unsyttingly,†
> Or not by just peys ‡ my sentence weigh,
> And not to the order of enditing obey,
> And my colours set ofté sythe awry."

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* A title which does not appear in the catalogue of his writings by Ritson, in his "Bibliographia Poetica."

† Unfittingly. ‡ Weight; probably from the French *poids*.

We might be curious to learn, with all these notions of the suitable, the weighty, the order of inditing, and the colors often awry, whether these versifiers had really any settled principles of criticism. Occleve is a vernacular writer, bare of ornament. He has told us that he knew little of "Latin nor French," though often counselled by his immortal master. His enthusiastic love thus exults:—

> "Thou wer't acquainted with Chaucer?—Pardie!
> God save his soul!
> The first findér of our faire langáge!"

There is one little circumstance more which connects the humble name of this versifier with that of Chaucer. His affectionate devotion to the great poet has been recorded by Speght in his edition of Chaucer. "Thomas Occleve, for the 'ove he bare to his master, caused his picture to be truly drawn in his book 'De Regimine Principis,' dedicated to Henry the Fifth." In this manuscript, with "fond idolatry," he placed the portraiture of his master facing an invocation. From this portrait the head on the poet's monument was taken, as well as all our prints. It bears a faithful resemblance to the picture of Chaucer painted on board in the Bodleian Library.* Had Occleve, with his feelings, sent us down some memorials of the poet and the man, we should have conned his verse in better humor; but the history of genius had not yet entered even into the minds of its most zealous votaries.†

* It is in Royal MS. 17 D. 6. The best is in the Harleian MS. 4866. There is also a very curious full-length preserved in a single leaf of vellum, Sloane MS. 5141; which has been copied in Shaw's "Dresses and Decorations of the Middle Ages," vol. i.—ED.

† A single trait, however, has come down to us from that other scholar of Chaucer, whom we are next to follow. Lydgate assures us, from what he heard, that the great poet would not suffer petty criticisms "to perturb his reste." He did not like to groan over, and "pinch at every blot," but always "did his best:"—

> "My master Chaucer that founde ful many spot,
> Hym lyste not gruche, nor pynch at every blot;
> Nor move himself to perturb his reste;
> I have perde tolde, but seyd alway his beste."—LYDGATE'S *Troy*.

LYDGATE, THE MONK OF BURY.

LYDGATE, the monk of Bury, was also the scholar of Chaucer. Our monk had not passed a whole sequestered life in his Benedictine monastery: he had journeyed through France and Italy, and was familiar with the writings of Dante and Petrarch and Boccaccio, and of Alain Chartier. The delectable catalogue of his writings, great and small, exceeds two hundred and fifty; and may not yet be complete, for they lie scattered in their manuscript state. A great multitude of writings, the incessant movements of a single mind, will at first convey to us a sense of magnitude; and in this magnitude, if we observe the greatest possible diversity of parts, and, if we may use the term, the flashings of the most changeable contrasts, we must place such a universal talent among the phenomena of literature.

LYDGATE composed epics, which were the lasting favorites of two whole centuries, — so long were classical repetitions of "Troy" and of "Thebes" not found irksome.* In his graver hours he instructed the world by ethical descants, Æsopian fables, and quaint proverbs; fixed their wonder by saintly legends and veracious chronicles; and disported in amorous ditties, and many a merrie tale: translating or inventing, labor or levity, rounded the unconscious day of the versifying monk. We descend from the "Siege of Troy," a romance of nearly

* "The Troy Tale" was composed at the command of the king, Henry the Fifth; as "the Fall of Princes," from Boccace, was at the desire of Humphrey, the good Duke of Gloucester. He wrote regal poems for kings, while he dispersed wisdom and merriment for their subjects.

thirty thousand lines, which long graced the oriel window, to the freer vein of humor of "London Lick-penny," which opens the street scenery of London in the fourteenth century; and "the Prioresse and her Three Wooers," that exquisitely ludicrous narrative ballad for the people.*

Ritson, whose rabid hostility to the clerical character was part of his constitutional malady, whether it related to "a mendacious prelate" or "a stinking monk," after having expended twenty pages in the mere enumeration of the titles of Lydgate's writings, heartlessly hints at the "cart-loads of rubbish of a voluminous poetaster, — a prosaic and drivelling monk;" and this is greedily seized on by the hand of the bibliographer. Percy and Ellis, too, mention DAN LYDGATE with contempt. Critics often find it convenient to resemble dogs, by barking one after the other, without any other cause than the first bark of a brother, who had only bayed the moon. It now seemed concluded that the rhyming monk was to be dismissed for ever. A very credible witness, however, at last deposed that "Lydgate has been oftener abused than read." † And now Mr. Hallam tells us that "GRAY, no light authority, speaks more favorably of Lydgate than either Warton or Ellis;" and this nervous writer, with his accustomed correct discernment, has alleged a valid reason why Gray

* While this volume is passing through the press, "A selection from the Minor Poems of Lydgate" has been edited by Mr. Halliwell. The versatility of Lydgate's poetical skill is advantageously shown in his comic satire, and his ethics drawn from a deep insight into human nature. The editor suggests a new reading for the title of the ballad of "London *Lick-penny*," more suitable to the misadventures of its hero, — London *Lack-penny;*" for London could not lick a penny from the forlorn hero who had not one to offer to it. GROSE, probably taken by the humorous designation, has placed it among his local proverbs.

The tale of the "Prioress and her Three Wooers" is one of the happiest fabliaux. Mr. Campbell transcribed "the merrie tale" for his Specimens; when he discovered that a preceding forager had anticipated him in Mr Jamieson, who has preserved it in his "Popular Ballads," i. 253.

† Turner's "Hist. of England," v.

excelled them in this criticism: for "great poets have often the taste to discern, and the candor to acknowledge, those beauties which are latent amidst the tedious dulness of their humbler brethren."

Warton has, however, afforded three copious chapters on Lydgate, which are half as much as his enthusiasm bestowed on Chaucer. A Gothic monk, composing ancient romances, was a subject too congenial to have been neglected by the historian of our poetry, and he has limned and illuminated the feudal priest with the love of the votary, who deemed, in his "lone hours," —

> "Nor rough nor barren are the winding ways
> Of hoar Antiquity, but strewn with flowers."

His miniature is exquisitely touched. "He was not only the poet of his monastery, but of the world in general. If a *disguising* was intended by the company of goldsmiths, a *mask* before his majesty, a *May-game* for the sheriffs and aldermen of London, a *mumming* before the lord-mayor, a procession of *pageants* for the festival of Corpus Christi, or a *carol* for the coronation, Lydgate was consulted, and gave the poetry."*

Mr. HALLAM objects that "the attention fails in the schoolboy stories of Thebes and Troy; but it seems probable that Lydgate would have been a better poet in satire upon his own times, or delineation of their manners, — themes which would have gratified US much more than the fate of princes."

This is relatively true, — true as regards some of US, but not at all as respects Lydgate, nor the people of his age, nor

* I may point out the raw material which our poetical antiquary has here worked up with such perfect effect in this picturesque enumeration. Appended to Speght's "Chaucer," that editor furnished a very curious list of about a hundred works by Lydgate, which were in his own possession. Most of the singular poetical exhibitions here enumerated are mentioned towards the end of that list, and which Warton has happily appropriated, and so turned a dry catalogue into a poetical picture. [A selection of Lydgate's Poems, forty-four in number, were printed by the Percy Society in 1840.]

the king and the princes who commanded themes congenial with their military character and their simple tastes, romantically charming the readers of two centuries. If our critic, in the exercise of his energetic faculties, lives out of the necromancy of the old Romaunt, afar from Thebes and Troy, Thomas Warton was cradled among the children of fancy, and in his rovings had tasted their wild honey. The only works of Lydgate which attracted his attention were precisely these tedious "Fate of Princes" and "the Troy Book."

The other modern critics — Ritson, Percy, and Ellis — had but a slight knowledge of DAN* LYDGATE. They have generally acted on the pressure of the moment to get up a hasty court of *Pie-poudre* — that fugitive tribunal held at fairs — to determine on the case of a culprit even before they could shake the dust off their feet. But time calls for an arrest of hasty judgments, or brings forward some illustrious advocate to reverse the judicial decision, or set forth the misfortunes of the accused. Two, most eminent in genius, stand by the side of the monk of Bury, — COLERIDGE and GRAY. Coleridge has left us his protest in favor of Lydgate; for he deeply regrets, that, in the general collection of our poets, the unpoetic editor "had not substituted *the whole of Lydgate's works from the manuscript extant* for the almost worthless Gower."† Gray alone has taken an enlarged view of the state of our poetry and our language at this period. When that master-spirit abandoned the history of our poetry from his fastidious

* DAN, as Ritson tells us, is a title given to the individuals of certain religious orders, from the barbarous Latin *Domnus*, a variation of *Dominus*, or the French *Dam* or *Dom*. *Dan* became a corruption of *Don* for *Dominus*. The title afterwards extended to persons of respectable condition, as vague as our complimentary esquire. It was applied to Chaucer by Spenser; and, when obsolete, it became jocular; for we have "Dan Cupid." Prior renewed it with ludicrous gravity when telling a tale which he had from "Dan Pope." It is still used in an honorable sense by the Spaniards in their DON.

† "Literary Remains," ii. 130.

delicacy or from his learned indolence, because Warton had projected it, English literature sustained an irreparable loss.* In Gray, surely, we have lost a literary historian such as the world has not yet had; so rare is that genius who happily combines qualities apparently incompatible. In his superior learning, his subtle taste, his deeper thought, and his more vigorous sense, we should have found the elements of a more philosophical criticism, with a more searching and comprehensive intellect, than can be awarded to our old favorite, THOMAS WARTON. In the neglected quartos of GRAY, we discover that the poet had set earnestly to work on the archæology of our poetry; we also find in his works those noble versions of the Northern Scalds and the Welsh bards, which he designed to have introduced into his history,—thus to have impressed on us a perfect notion of a national poetry by poetry itself; a rare good fortune, which does not enliven the toil of prosaic critics or verbal interpreters. Gray had found the manuscripts of Lydgate at Cambridge, and has made them a vehicle for the most beautiful disquisitions. On a passage in Lydgate, the poet-critic develops a curious occurrence in the history of the poetic art; namely, that proneness to minute circumstances which lengthens the strains of our elder poets, and which the impatience of modern taste rejects as tediousness: yet this will be found to be "the essence of poetry and oratory." This topic is important; and, as I can neither add nor dare to take away from this perfect criticism, I submit to the task of transcribing what I am sure will come to most of my readers in all its freshness and novelty.

Our ancient poet seems to be apologizing for telling long stories, which he asserts cannot be told "in wordes few:"—

* The great poet has left two or three most precious fragments; but these have long been buried in those ill-fated quartos, consisting chiefly of notes on Greek and on Plato, which Matthias published with extraordinary pomp, and, so he used to say, as a monument for himself as well as the bard,—a monument which, his egregious self-complacency lived to witness, partook more of the properties of a tombstone than the glory of a column.

"For a storye which is not plainly told,
But constreyned under *wordes few*
For lack of truth, wher they ben new or olde,
Men by reporte cannot the matter shewe:
These oakés greaté be not down yhewe
First at a stroke, but by *a long prócesse;*
Nor long stories a word may not expresse."

LYDGATE, in his "Fall of Princes."

On this, Gray has delivered the following observations: "These 'long processes,' indeed, suited wonderfully with the attention and simple curiosity of the age in which LYDGATE lived: many a *stroke* have he and the best of his contemporaries spent upon *a sturdy old story*, till they had blunted their own edge and that of their readers; at least, a modern reader will find it so. But it is a folly to judge of the understanding and patience of those times by our own. They loved, I will not say tediousness, but *length* and a train of circumstances, in a narration. The vulgar do so still: it gives an air of reality to facts; it fixes the attention; raises and keeps in suspense their expectation, and supplies the defects of their little and lifeless imagination; and it keeps pace with the slow motion of their own thoughts. Tell them a story as you would tell it to a man of wit; it will appear to them as an object seen in the night by a flash of lightning: but, when you have placed it in various lights and in various positions, they will come at last to see and feel it as well as others. But we need not confine ourselves to the vulgar, and to understandings beneath our own. Circumstance ever was and ever will be the life and the essence both of oratory and of poetry. It has in some sort the same effect upon every mind that it has upon that of the populace; and I fear the *quickness and delicate impatience of these polished times* in which we live are but the forerunners of the decline of all those beautiful arts which depend upon the imagination. Homer, the father of *circumstance*, has occasion for the same apology which I am making for Lydgate and for his predecessors."*

* "Gray's Works," by Matthias, ii. p. 60

At the monastery of Bury we might have listened to that Gothic monk's "goodly tale," or "notable proverb of Æsopus" for the nonce; or saintly legend, or "merrie balade;" or the story of "Thebes," which the scholar took up from his master Chaucer; or that from "Bochas," and Guido Colonna's "Troy Book:" but too numerous were the volumes to tell, and too voluminous was many a volume. Verbose and diffuse, yet clear and fluent, ran his page; too minutely copious were his descriptions, yet the delineations seemed the more graphical; his verse, too long or too short, halts in his measures till we fall into the minstrel's "metring," and lines break forth, beautiful as any in our day. He expands the same image, and loses all likeness in a prolix simile; for his readers were not so impatient as ourselves. These poets suffered or enjoyed a fatal facility of rhyming, lost for us, from the use of polysyllabic words from the French and the Latin accented on the last syllable, — a custom continued by the Scots; and these provided them with too ready an abundance of poetic terminations or rhymes, tending to make their poems voluminous. The art of selection is the art of an age less florid and more fastidious, but not always more genial or more inventive. The pruning-hook was not in use when planters were too eager to gather the first-fruits from the trees which their own hands had put into the earth.

Alas! apologies only leave irremediable faults as they were. The tediousness of Dan Lydgate remains as languid, his verse as halting, and "Thebes" and "Troy" as desolate, as we found them!

Let us, however, be reminded, that he who wholly neglects the study of our ancient poets must submit to the loss of knowledge which a philosopher would value: the manners of the age, the modes of feeling, the stream of thought, the virgin fancies, and that position which the human character takes in distant ages, — these will imbue his memory with the genius of his country and the eternal truth of authentic na-

ture. No English poet should wholly resign these masses of vernacular poetry to the lone closet of the antiquary: he who loves the gain of labor will excavate these quarries for their marble; for we know they are marble, since many a noble column has been raised from these shapeless and unhewed blocks.

THE INVENTION OF PRINTING.

PRINTING remained, as long as its first artificers could keep it, a secret and occult art; and it is the only one that ceaselessly operates all the miracles which the others had vainly promised.

Who first thought to carve the wooden immovable letters on blocks? — to stamp the first sheet which ever was imprinted? Or who, second in invention, but first in utility, imagined to cast the metal with fusil types, separate from each other? — to fix this scattered alphabet in a form, and thus by one stroke write a thousand manuscripts, and, with the identical letters, multiply, not a single work, but all sorts of works hereafter? Was it fortunate chance, or deliberate meditation, or both in gradual discovery, which produced this invention? In truth, we can neither detect the rude beginnings, nor hardly dare to fix on the beginners. The *Origines Typographicæ* are, even at this late hour, provoking a fierce controversy, not only among those who live in the shades of their libraries, but with honest burghers; for the glory of patriotism has connected itself with the invention of an art which came to us like a divine revelation in the history of man. But the place, the mode, and the person — the invention and the inventor — are the subjects of volumes! Votaries of Fust, of Schöffer, of Gutenberg, of Costar! a sullen silence or a deadly feud is your only response. Ye jealous cities of Mentz, of Strasburg, and of Haarlem, each of ye have your armed champion at your gates!*

* The city of Haarlem designs to erect a statue of COSTAR [since this was written, the statue has been placed in the great square]; thus publicly,

The mystical eulogist of the art of printing, who declared that "the invention came from Heaven," was not more at a loss to detect the origin than those who have sought for it among the earliest printers.* Learned but angry disputants on the origin of printing, what if the art can boast of no single inventor, and was not the product of a single act? Consider the varieties of its practice, the change of wood to metal, the fixed to the movable type; view the complexity of its machinery: repeated attempts must often have preceded so many inventions ere they terminated in the great one. From the imperfect and contradictory notices of the early essays, — and of the very earliest we may have no record, — we must infer that the art, though secret, was progressive, and that many imperfect beginnings were going on at the same time in different places.

Struck by the magnitude and the magnificence of the famous Bible of Fust, some have decided on the invention of the art by one of its most splendid results: this, however, is not in the usual course of human affairs, nor in the nature of things. "The art of Printing," observes Dr. Cotton in his introduction, "was brought almost to perfection in its infancy; so that, like Minerva, it may be said to have sprung to life, mature, vigorous, and armed for war." But in the

in the eyes of Europe, to vindicate the priority of this inventor of typography. But a statue is not the final argument, which, like the cannon of monarchs (that *ultima ratio regum*), will carry conviction on the spot it is placed. Mentz has already erected a statue of GUTENBERG. I have no doubt, that, in the present state of agitation, both these statues will have much to say to one another, as the mystical Pasquin and Marforio of typography.

* "Some Observations on the Use and Original of the noble Art and Mystery of Printing," by F. Burges. Norwich, 1701. This is declared to be the first book printed at Norwich; where it appears that the establishment of a printing-office, so late as in 1701, encountered a stern opposition from its sage citizens. The writer did not know, that, as far back as 1570, a Dutch printer had exercised the novel art by printing religious books for a community of Dutch emigrants who had taken refuge at Norwich, according to the recent discovery of Dr. Cotton, in his "Typographical Gazetteer," — a volume abounding with the most vigorous researches.

article "Moguntia, or Mentz," this acute researcher states, that, "after all that has been written with such angry feelings upon the long-contested question of the *origin of the Art of Printing*, Mentz appears still to preserve the best-founded claim to the honor of being the *birth-place of the Typographic Art;* because," he adds, "the specimens adduced in favor of Haarlem and Strasburg, even if we should allow their genuineness, are confessedly of *a rude and imperfect execution.*" We require no other evidence of the important fact, that the art, in its early stages, had to pass through many transitions,—from the small school-books, or Donatuses, of Costar, to the splendid Bible of Fust. Had the art been borrowed or stolen from a single source, according to the popular tradition, the works would have borne a more fraternal resemblance, and have evinced less inferiority of execution; but if several persons at the same time were working in secrecy, each by his own method, their differences and their inferiority would produce "the rude and imperfect specimens." Mr. Hallam has suffered his strong emotion on the greatness of the invention to reflect itself back on the humble discoverers themselves; and, unusual with his searching inquiries, calls once more on Dr. Cotton's Minerva, but with a more celestial panoply. "The *high-minded inventors* of this great art tried, at *the very outset*, so bold a flight as the printing *an entire Bible.* It was Minerva leaping on earth in her divine strength and radiant armor, ready at the moment of her nativity to subdue and destroy her enemies."* The Bible called the Mazarine Bible, thus distinguished from having been found in the cardinal's library, remains still a miracle of typography, not only for its type, but for the quality of the paper and the sparkling blackness of its ink.† The success of the art was established by this Bible; but the goldsmith Fust, who himself was no

* Hallam's "Introduction to the Literature of Europe," i. 211.

† Twenty copies of this famous Bible exist: one is preserved in our Royal Library.

printer, was no otherwise "high-minded" than by the usurious prices he speculated on for this innocent imposture of vending what was now a printed book for a manuscript copy!

No refined considerations of the nature and the universal consequences of their discovery seem to have instigated the earliest printers: this is evident by the perpetual jealousy and the mystifying style by which they long attempted to hide that secret monopoly which they had now obtained.

The first notions of printing might have reached Europe from China. Our first block-printing seems imitated from the Chinese, who print with blocks of wood on one side of the paper, as was done in the earliest essays of printing; and the Chinese seem also to have suggested the use of a thick black ink. European traders might have imported some fugitive leaves: their route has even been indicated, from Tartary, by the way of Russia; and from China and Japan, through the Indies and the Arabian Gulf. The great antiquity of printing in China has been ascertained. Du Halde and the missionary Jesuits assert that this art was practised by the Chinese half a century before the Christian era! At all events, it is evident that they exercised it many centuries before it was attempted in Europe. The history of gunpowder would illustrate the possibility of the same extraordinary invention occurring at distinct periods. Roger Bacon indicated the terrible ingredients a hundred years before the monk Schwartz, about 1330, actually struck out the fiery explosion, and had the glory of its invention. Machines to convey to a distance the thunder and the lightning described by their discoverers were not long after produced; but it would have astonished these inventors to have learnt that guns had been used as early as the year 85 A.D., and that the fatal powder had been invented previously by the Chinese. Well might the philosophical Langles be struck by "the singular coincidence of the invention in Europe of the compass, of gunpowder, and of printing, about the same period, within

a century." These three mighty agents in human affairs have been traced to that wary and literary nation, who, though they prohibit all intercourse with "any barbarian eye," might have suffered these sublime inventions to steal away over "their great wall."

What has happened to the art of printing also occurred to the sister-art of engraving on copper. Tradition had ascribed the invention as the accidental discovery of the goldsmith Maso Finiguerra. But the Germans insist that they possess engravings before the days of the Italian artist; and it is not doubtful that several of the compatriots of Finiguerra were equally practising the art with himself. Heinecken would arbitrate between the jealous patriots: he concedes that Vasari might ascribe the invention of the art in Italy to Finiguerra, yet that engraving might have been practised in Germany, though unknown in Italy. Buonarotti, the great judge of all art, was sensible, that, in this sort of invention, every artist makes his own discoveries. Alluding to the art of engraving, he says, "It would be sufficient to occasion our astonishment, that the ancients did not discover the art of chalcography, were it not known that DISCOVERIES OF THIS SORT generally occur ACCIDENTALLY to the mechanics in the exercise of their calling."* On this principle we may confidently rest. All the early printers, like the rivals of Finiguerra at home, and his unknown concurrents in Germany, were proceeding with the same art, and might urge their distinct claims.

The natural magic of concave and convex lenses, those miracles of optical science, one of which searches Nature when she eludes the eye, and the other approximates the remotest star, — the microscope and the telescope; who were their inventors? and how have those inventions happened? These instruments appeared about the same time. The Ger-

* Ottley's "Inquiry into the Early History of Engraving."

mans ascribe the invention of the microscope to a Dutchman, one Drebell; while the Neapolitan Fontana claims the anterior invention; but which Viviani, the scholar of Galileo, asserts, from his own knowledge, was presented to the King of Poland by that father of modern philosophy long anterior to the date fixed on by the Germans. The history of the telescope offers a similar result. Fracastorius may have accidentally combined two lenses; but he neither specified the form nor the quality; and in these consisted the real discovery, which we find in Baptista Porta, and which subsequently was perfected by Galileo. The invention of the art of printing seems a parallel one. It appeared in various quarters about the same time; and in the process of successive attempts, by intimation, by conjecture, and by experiment, each artificer insensibly advanced into a more perfect invention; till some fortunate claimant for the discovery puts aside all preceding essayists, who, not without some claims to the invention, leave their advocates in another generation to dispute about their rights, which are buried in oblivion, or falsified by traditional legends.

Thus it has happened that obscure traditions envelop the origin of some of the most interesting inventions. Had these ingenious discoveries been as simple and as positive as their historians oppositely maintain, these origins had not admitted of such interminable disputes. We may therefore reasonably suspect that the practitioners in every art which has reached to almost a perfect state, such as that of printing, have silently borrowed from one another; that there has often existed a secret connection in things, and a reciprocal observation in the intercourse of men alike intent on the same object; that countries have insensibly transferred a portion of their knowledge to their neighbors; that travellers in every era have imparted their novelties, hints however crude, descriptions however imperfect: all such slight notices escape the detection of an historian; nothing can reach him but the excel-

lence of some successful artist. In vain rival concurrents dispute the invention: the patriotic historian of the art clings to his people or his city, to fix the inventor and the invention, and promulgates fairy tales to authenticate the most uncertain evidence.*

The history of printing illustrates this view of its origin. The invention has been long ascribed to GUTENBERG: yet some have made it doubtful whether this presumed father of the art ever succeeded in printing a book; for we are assured that no colophon has revealed his name. We hear of his attempts and of his disappointments, his bickerings and his lawsuits. He seems to have been a speculative bungler in a new-found art, which he mysteriously hinted was to make a man's fortune. The goldsmith, Fust, advanced a capital in search of the novel alchemy: the project ends in a lawsuit; the goldsmith gains his cause, and the projector is discharged. Gutenberg lures another simple soul, and the same golden dream vanishes in the dreaming. These copartners, evidently tired of an art which had not yet found an artist, a young man, probably improving on Gutenberg's blunders, one happy day displayed to the eyes of his master, Fust, a proof pulled from his own press. In rapture, the master confers on this Peter Schœffer a share of his future fortunes; and, to bind the apprentice by the safest ties of consanguinity, led the

* Dr. WETTER, of Mentz, has lately shown, that, contrary to the common opinion, Gutenberg himself printed long with *wooden blocks;* and that, instead of the invention of movable types having been the result of long study, *it arose out of a "sudden fancy."*

How the doctor has authenticated "the sudden fancy," I know not; but the apotheosis has passed. In three successive days, in the month of August, 1837, all Mentz congregated to worship the statue, by Thorwaldsen, of their ancient citizen, in the square that henceforward bears his name. A chorus of seven hundred voices resounded the laud of the German printer; the flags in the regatta waved to his honor; and the festival rejoiced the city: and, when the figure of Gutenberg was unveiled, the artillery, the music, and the people's voices, blending together, seemed to echo in the skies.

swart youth, glorious with printer's ink, to the fair hand of his young daughter. The new partnership produced their famed Psalter of 1457; and shortly followed their magnificent Bible.

While these events were occurring, COSTAR, of Haarlem, was plodding on with the same "noble mystery," but only printing on one side of a leaf; not having yet discovered that a leaf might be contrived to contain two pages. The partisans of Costar assert that it was proved he substituted movable for fixed letters; which was a giant's footstep in this new path. A faithless servant ran off with the secret. The history of printing abounds with such tales. Every step in the progress of the newly invented art indicates its gradual accessions. The numbering of the pages was not thought of for a considerable time: the leaves were long only distinguished by letters or signatures, — a custom still preserved, though apparently superfluous.

There is something attractive for rational curiosity in the earliest beginnings of every art: every slight improvement, even though trivial, has its motive, and supplies some want. On this principle, the history of punctuation enters into the history of literature. Caxton had the merit of introducing the Roman pointing as used in Italy; and his successor, Pynson, triumphed by domiciliating the Roman letter. The dash, or perpendicular line, thus, | was the only punctuation they used. It was, however, discovered that "the craft of poynting, well used, makes the sentence very light." The more elegant comma supplanted the long, uncouth | : the colon was a refinement, "showing that there is more to come." But the semicolon was a Latin delicacy which the obtuse English typographer resisted. So late as 1580 and 1590, treatises on orthography do not recognize any such innovator; the Bible of 1592, though printed with appropriate accuracy, is without a semicolon: but in 1633 its full rights are established by Charles Butler's "English Grammar." In this

chronology of the four points of punctuation, it is evident that Shakspeare could never have used the semicolon; a circumstance which the profound George Chalmers mourns over, opining that semicolons would often have saved the poet from his commentators.

Fust had bound his workmen to secrecy by the solemnity of an oath; but, at the siege of Mentz, that freemasonry was lost. These early printers dispersed; some were even bribed away. Two Germans set up their press in the monastery of Subiaco, in the vicinity of Naples, whose confraternity consisted of German monks. These very printers finally retreated to Rome for that patronage they had still to seek; and at Rome they improved the art by adopting the Roman character. Not only the invention of the art was progressive, but the art itself was much more so.

We have other narratives of printers romantically spirited away from the parent-presses: one of the most extraordinary is the history of printing set up at Oxford, ten years before the art was practised in Europe, except at Haarlem and Mentz. Henry VI., by advice of the Archbishop of Canterbury, despatched a confidential agent in disguise, under the guidance of Caxton, in his trading journeys to Flanders. The Haarlemites were so jealous of idling strangers who had come on the same insidious design, that foreigners had frequently been imprisoned.

The royal agent never ventured to enter the city; but by heavy bribes, in a secret intercourse with the workmen, one dark night he smuggled a printer aboard a vessel, and carried away Frederick Corsellis. That printer, on landing in England, was attended by a guard to Oxford. There he was constantly watched till he had revealed the mysterious craft. The evidence of this unheard-of history hinged on a record at Lambeth Palace authenticating the whole narrative, and on a monument of Corsellis's art, which any one might inspect at the Bodleian; being a book bearing a date six years prior

to any printing by Caxton. The record at Lambeth, however, was never found, and never heard of; and the date of the book might have been accidentally or designedly falsified. An *x* dropped in the date of the impression would account for the singularity of a book printed before our Caxton had acquired the art. The tale long excited a sharp controversy, when Corsellis at Oxford was considered as the first printer in England. The possibility of the existence of this person at Oxford, and even of the book he printed, appears by a lively investigation of Dr. Cotton;* and I have been assured of a circumstance, which, if true, would render the story of Corsellis probable: it is that a family of this name may still be found in Oxfordshire. The whole history has, however, by some been considered as supposititious, standing on the single evidence of a Sir Richard Atkyns, a servile lawyer and royalist, of no great character, in the days of Charles the Second.† Grafting his tale on the accident of the date of this book, he had a covert design, — to maintain a theory or a right that printing was "a flower of the crown;" constituting the sovereign the printer of England, all others being his servants! This enormous prevention of the abuses of the press was not deemed too extravagant for those desperate times.

The only certainty in the history of printing, after all the fables of its origin, is its native place. It is a German romance, enlivened by some mysterious adventures; wanting only the opening pages, which no one can supply.‡ Even

* Dr. Cotton's curious "Typographical Gazetteer," art. Oxonia. Of a class of the earliest printed books, having no printer's name, he observes, "These may have been printed by Corsellis, or any one else."

† Atkyns on the "Original and Growth of Printing." This quarto pamphlet is highly valued among collectors for Loggan's beautiful print of Charles the Second, Archbishop Shelden, and Gen. Monk. Dr. Middleton refuted this ridiculous tale of an ideal printer, one Corsellis, in his "Dissertation on the Origin of Printing in England," first published 1735, and which now may be seen in his works.

‡ The fourth day of the "Bibliographical Decameron" of Dr. Dibdin exhibits an ample view of the pending controversies on the "Origines Ty-

the most philosophic of bibliographers, Daunou, utters a cry of despair, and moreover, at this late day, seems at a loss to decide on the nature of the influence of the art of printing! "We live too near the epoch of the discovery of printing to judge accurately of its influence, and too far from it to know the circumstances which gave birth to it." Our sage seems to think that another cycle of at least a thousand years must pass away ere we can decide on the real influence of printing over the destinies of man: this new tree of knowledge bears other fruit than that of its own sweetness, source of good and evil, of sense and of nonsense, whence we pluck the windy fruitage of opinions crude and changeable!

How has it happened that such a plain story as that of the art of printing should have sunk into a romance? Solely because the monopolizers dreaded discovery. It originated in deception, and could only flourish for their commercial spirit in mysterious obscurity. Among the first artisans of printing, every one sought to hide his work, and even to blind the workmen. After their operations, they cautiously unscrewed the four sides of their forms, and threw the scattered type beneath; for, as one craftily observed to his partner, "when the component parts of the press are in pieces, no one will understand what they mean." One of the early printers of the fifteenth century at Mutina, or Modena, professes his press to have been *in ædibus subterraneis;* doubtless, if possible, still further to darken the occult mystery. They delivered themselves in a mystical style when they alluded to their unnamed art, and impressed on the marvelling reader that the volume he held in his hand was the work of some supernatural agency. They announced that the volumes in this newly found art were "neither drawn, nor written with a pen and ink, as all books before had been." In the "Recuyel of the Historyes of Troye," our honest printer, plain Caxton, caught

pographicæ." Every bibliographer has his favorite hero. The reader will observe that I have none; and yet possibly my tale may be the truest.

the hyperbolical style of the dark monopolizing spirit of the confraternity. I give his words, having first spelt them: "I have practised and learned at my great charge, and dispense to ordain (put in order) this said book in print after the manner and form as ye may here see; and is not written with pen and ink as other books be, to the end that *every man may have them* AT ONCE: for all the books of this story, thus imprinted as ye see, were *begun in one day, and also finished in one day.*" A volume of more than seven hundred folio pages, "begun and finished in one day," was not the less marvellous for being impossible. But for the times was the style! Caxton would keep up the wonder and the mystery of an art which men did not yet comprehend; and because a whole sheet might have been printed in one day, and was *all at once* pulled off, and not line by line, our venerable printer mystified the world. And all this was said at a time when so slow was the process of transcription, that one hundred Bibles could not be procured under the expense of seven thousand days, or of nearly twenty years' labor. Honest men, too eager in their zeal, particularly when their personal interests are at stake, sometimes strain truth on the tenter-hooks of fiction. The false miracle which our primeval printer professed he had performed, we seem to have realized: it is amusing to conceive the wonderment of Caxton, were he now among us, to view the steam working that cylindrical machine which disperses the words of a speaker throughout the whole nation, when the voice which uttered them is still lingering on our ear!

THE FIRST ENGLISH PRINTER.

The ambitious wars of a potent aristocracy inflicted on this country half a century of public misery. Our fields were a soil of blood; and maternal England long mourned for victories she obtained over her own children, — lord against lord, brother against brother, and the son against the father. Rival administrations alternately dispossess each other by sanguinary conflict; a new monarch attaints the friends of his predecessor; conspiracy rises against conspiracy, scaffold against scaffold; the king is re-enthroned, — the king perishes in the Tower; York is triumphant, and York is annihilated.

Few great families there were who had not immolated their martyrs or their victims; and it frequently occurred, that the same family had fallen equally on both sides; for it was a war of the aristocracy with the aristocracy: "Save the commons, and kill the captains!" was the general war-cry. The distracted people were perhaps indifferent to the varying fortunes of the parties, accustomed as they were to behold after each battle the heads of lords and knights raised on every bridge and gate.

During this dread interval, all things about us were thrown back into a state of the rudest infancy: the illiterature of the age approached to barbarism; the evidences of history were destroyed; there was such a paucity of readers, that no writers were found to commemorate contemporary events. Indeed, had there been any, who could have ventured to arbitrate between such contradictory accounts, where every party had

to tell their own tale? Oblivion, not history, seemed to be the consolation of those miserable times.

It was at such an unhappy era that the new-found art of printing was introduced into England by an English trader, who for thirty years had passed his life in Flanders, conversant with no other languages than were used in those countries.

Our literature was interested in the intellectual character of our first English printer. A powerful mind might, by the novel and mighty instrument of thought, have created a national taste, or have sown that seed of curiosity without which no knowledge can be reared. Such a genius might have anticipated by a whole century that general passion for sound literature which was afterwards to distinguish our country. But neither the times nor the man were equal to such a glorious advancement.

The first printed book in the English language was not printed in England. It is a translation of Râoul le Fevre's "Recuyel of the Historyes of Troye," famed in its own day as the most romantic history; and in ours, for the honor of bibliography, romantically valued at the cost of a thousand guineas. This first monument of English printing issued from the infant press at Cologne in 1471, where Caxton first became initiated in "the noble mystery and craft" of printing, when printing was yet truly "a mystery;" and Caxton himself did not import the art which was to effect such an intellectual revolution till a year or two afterwards, on his return home. The first printer, it is evident, had no other conception of the machine he was about to give the nation than as an ingenious contrivance, or a cheap substitute for costly manuscripts: possibly he might, in his calculating prudence, even be doubtful of its success!

At the announcement of the first printed book in our vernacular idiom, the mind involuntarily pauses: looking on the humble origin of our bibliography, and on the obscure com-

mencement of the newly found art of printing itself, we are startled at the vast and complicated results.

The contemporaries of our first printer were not struck by their novel and precious possession, of which they participated in the first-fruits in the circulation and multiplication of their volumes. The introduction of the art into England is wholly unnoticed by the chroniclers of the age, so unconscious they were of this new implement of the human mind. We find Fabian, who must have known Caxton personally, — both being members of the Mercers' Company, — passing unnoticed his friend; and, instead of any account of the printing-press, we have only such things as "a new weathercock placed on the cross of St. Paul's steeple." Hall, so copious in curious matters, discovered no curiosity to memorialize in the printing-press; Grafton was too heedless; and Holinshed, the most complete of our chroniclers, seems to have had an intention of saying something by his insertion of a single line, noticing the name of "Caxton as the first practiser of the art of printing;" but he was more seriously intent in the same paragraph to give a narrative of "a bloody rain, the red drops falling on the sheets which had been hanged to dry." The history of printing in England has been vainly sought for among English historians; so little sensible were they to those expansive views and elevated conceptions which are now too commonplace eulogies to repeat.

By what subdolous practices among the first inventors of this secret art Caxton obtained its mastery, we are not told, except that he learnt the new art "at his own great cost and expense;" and, on his final return home, he was accompanied by foreigners who lived in his house, and after his death became his successors. Wynkyn de Worde, Pynson, Machlinia, and others, by their names betray their German origin. We have recently discovered that we had even a French printer who printed English books. Francis Regnault (or Reynold, Anglicized) was a Frenchman, who fell under the displeasure

of the Inquisition for printing the Bible in English. He resided in England, and had in hand a number of primers in English, and other similar books, which at length excited the jealousy of *the Company of Booksellers in London*, in the reign of Henry the Eighth. To allay this bibliopolic storm, the affrighted French printer, with all his stock in hand, procured Coverdale and Grafton to intercede with Cromwell to grant him a license to sell what he had already printed, engaging hereafter "to print no more in the *English tongue* unless he have an *Englishman* that is learned to be his corrector;" and, further, he offers to cancel and reprint any faulty leaf again.*

Caxton did not extend his views beyond those of a mercantile printer and an indifferent translator. As a writer, Caxton had reason to speak with humility of the style of his vernacular versions. His patroness, the Lady Margaret, sister to our Edward the Fourth, and Duchess of Burgundy, after inspecting some quires of his translation of the "Recuyel of the Historyes of Troye," returned them; finding, as Caxton ingenuously acknowledges, "some defaut in his English, which she commanded him to amend." Tyrwhit sarcastically observes, that the duchess might have been a purist. As we are not told what were these "defauts," we cannot decide on the good taste or the fastidiousness of the sister of Edward the Fourth. But the duchess was not the only critic whom Caxton had to encounter; for we learn by his preface to his "Boke of Æneydos compiled by Virgil," now metamorphosed into a barbarous French prose romance, and the French translation translated, that there were "gentlemen who of late have blamed me, that in my translations I had over-curious terms which could not be understood by common people. I fain would satisfy every man." He apologizes for his own style by alleging the unsettled state of the

* "State Papers of Henry the Eighth," vol. i. 589.

English language, of which he tells us that "the language now used varieth far from that which was used and spoken when I was born." An absence of thirty years from his native land did not improve a diction which originally had been none of the purest. We find in his translations an abundance of pure French words; and it is remarkable that the printer of the third edition of the Troy history, in 1607, altered whole sentences "into plainer English;" alleging, "the translator, William Caxton, being, *as it seemeth*, no Englishman!"

The "curious" prices now given among the connoisseurs of our earliest typography for their "Caxtons," as his Gothic works are thus honorably distinguished, have induced some, conforming to traditional prejudice, to appreciate by the same fanciful value "the Caxtonian style." But though we are not acquainted with the "defauts" which offended the Lady Margaret, nor with the "terms which were not easily understood," as alleged by "the gentlemen," nor with "the sentences improperly Englished," as the later printer declared, we shall not, I suspect, fall short of the mark if we conclude that the style of a writer destitute of a literary education, a prolix genius with a lax verbosity, and almost a foreigner in his native idiom, could not attain to any skill or felicity in the maternal tongue.

As a printer, without erudition, Caxton would naturally accommodate himself to the tastes of his age; and it was therefore a consequence, that no great author appears among "the Caxtons." The most glorious issues of his press were a Chaucer and a Gower, wherein he was simply a printer. The rest of his works are translations of fabulous histories, and those spurious writings of the monkish ages ascribed by ignorant transcribers to some ancient sage. He appears frequently to have been at a loss what book to print, and to have accidentally chosen the work in hand: so he tells us, "Having no work in hand, I sitting in my study, where as lay many diverse paunflettes and bookys, happened that to my

hand came a lytel boke in French, which late was translated out of Latin by some noble clerk of France, which book is named Æneydos." And this was the origin of his puerile romance! He exercised no discrimination in his selection of authors, and the simplicity of our first printer far exceeded his learning. One of his greater works is "the noble History of King Arthur and of certain of his Knights." Caxton, who had charmed himself and his ignorant readers with his authentic "Æneydos," hesitated to print "this history;" for there were different opinions that "there was no such Arthur, and that all such books as be made of him be but feigned and fables." It would be difficult to account for the scepticism of one who always found the marvellous more delectable than the natural, and who had published so many "feigned" histories, — as "the veray trew History of the valiant Knight Jason," or the "Life of Hercules," and all "the Merveilles of Virgil's Necromancy," — solemnly vouching for their verity! His sudden scruples were, however, relieved, when "a gentleman" assured our printer that "it was great folly and blindness in the disbelievers of this true history."

In the early stage of civilization, men want knowledge to feel any curiosity: like children, they are only affected through the medium of their imagination. But it is a phenomenon in the history of the human mind, that at a period of refinement we may approximate to one of barbarism. This happens when the ruling passion wholly returns to fiction, and thus terminates in a reckless disregard for all other studies. Whenever history, severe and lofty, displaying men as they are, is degraded among the revels and the masques of romance; and the slow inductions of reasoning, and the minute discoveries of research, and the nice affinities of analogy, are impatiently rejected, while Fiction in her exaggerated style swells every object into a colossal size, and raises every passion into hyperbolical violence, — a distaste for knowledge, and a coldness for truth, which must follow, are fatal to the sanity

of the intellect. And thus, in the day of our refinement, we may be reverting to our barbarous infancy.

Caxton, mindful of his commercial interests and the taste of his readers, left the glory of restoring the classical writers of antiquity, which he could not read, to the learned printers of Italy.* The Orator of Cicero, the histories of Herodotus and Polybius, the ethics of Seneca, and the elaborate volumes of St. Austin, were some of the rich fruits of the early typography of the German printers who had conveyed their new art to the Neapolitan monastery of Subiaco. Our English printer, indeed, might have heard of their ill fortune, when, in a petition to the pope, they sent forth this cry: "Our house is full of proof-sheets; but we have nothing to eat!" The trivial productions from Caxton's press, romantic or religious legends, and treatises on hunting and hawking, and the moralities of the game of chess, with Reynard the Fox, were more amusing to the ignorant readers of his country: but the national genius was little advanced by a succession of "merveillous workes;" nor would the crude, unformed tastes of the readers be matured by stimulating their inordinate appetites. The first printing-press in England did not serve to raise the national taste out of its barbarous infancy. Caxton was not a genius to soar beyond his age; but he had the industry to keep pace with it; and with little judgment, and less learning, he found no impediment in his selection of authors or his progress in translation.

Our earliest printed works consist of these translations of French translations; and the historian of our poetry considered that this very circumstance, which originated in the

* We have Caxton's own confession in his preface to "the Book of Æneydos," or the "Æneid" of Virgil, where, in soliciting the late-created poet-laureate in the University of Oxford, John Skelton, to oversee his prose translation of the French translation, he notices the translations of Skelton of "the Epistles of Tully," and the "History of Diodorus Siculus," *out of Latin into English*, and as "one that had read Virgil, Ovid, Tully, and all the other noble poets and orators to *me unknown*."

general illiteracy of the times, was more favorable to our vernacular literature than would have been the publication of Roman writers in their original language. Had it not been for these French versions, Caxton could not have furnished any of his own. The multiplication of English copies multiplied English readers; and when, at length, there was a generation of readers, an English press induced many to turn authors who were only qualified to write in their native tongue.

Venerable shade of Caxton! the award of the tribunal of posterity is a severe decision, but an imprescriptible law. Men who appear at certain eras of society, however they be lauded for what they have done, are still liable to be censured for not doing what they ought to have done. Patriarch of the printing-press, who to thy last and dying day withdrew not thy hand from thy work! it is hard that thou shouldst be amenable to a law which thy faculties were not adequate to comprehend: surely thou mayst triumph, thou simple man! amid the echoes of thy "Caxtonians" rejoicing over thy Gothic leaves; but the historian of the human mind is not the historian of typography.

EARLY LIBRARIES.

THERE probably was a time when there existed no private libraries in the kingdom, nor any save the monastic: that of Oxford, at the close of the thirteenth century, consisted of "a few tracts kept in chests." In that primeval age of book-collecting, shelves were not yet required. Royalty itself seems to have been destitute of a royal library. It appears, by one of our recently published records, that King John borrowed a volume from a rich abbey; and the king gave a receipt to Simon his chancellor for "the book called Pliny," which had been in the custody of the Abbot and Convent of Reading. "The Romance of the History of England," with other volumes, have also royal receipts. The king had either deposited these volumes for security with the abbot, or, what seems not improbable, had no established collection which could be deemed a library; and, as leisure or curiosity stimulated, commanded the loan of a volume.

The borrowing of a volume was a serious concern in those days, and heavy was the pledge or the bond required for the loan. One of the regulations of the library of the Abbey of Croyland, Ingulphus has given. It regards "the lending of their books, as well the smaller without pictures as the larger with pictures:" any loan is forbidden under no less a penalty than that of excommunication, which might possibly be a severer punishment than the gallows.

Long after this period, our English libraries are said to have been smaller than those on the Continent; and yet, one century and a half subsequently to the reign of John, the

royal library of France, belonging to a monarch who loved literature, Jean le Bon, did not exceed ten volumes. In those days, they had no idea of establishing a library: the few volumes which each monarch collected at great cost were always dispersed by gifts or bequests at their death: nothing passed to their successor but the missals, the *heures*, and the *offices* of their chapels. These monarchs of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, amid the prevailing ignorance of the age, had not advanced in their comprehension of the uses of a permanent library beyond their great predecessor of the ninth; for Charlemagne had ordered his books to be sold after his death, and the money given to the poor.

Yet, among these early French kings, there were several who were lovers of books, and were not insensible of the value of a studious intercourse, anxious to procure transcribers and translators. A curious fact has been recorded of St. Louis, that during his crusade in the East, having learned that a Saracen prince employed scribes to copy the best writings of philosophy for the use of students, on his return to France he adopted the same practice, and caused the Scriptures and the works of the Fathers to be transcribed from copies found in different abbeys. These volumes were deposited in a secure apartment, to which the learned might have access; and he himself passed much of his time there, occupied in his favorite study, — the writings of the Fathers.*

Charles Le Sage, in 1373, had a considerable library, amounting to nine hundred volumes. He placed this collection in one of the towers of the Louvre, hence denominated the "Tour de la Librarie;" and intrusted it to the custody of his valet-de-chambre, Gilles Malet, constituting him his librarian.† He was no common personage; for, great as was the

* "Essai Historique sur la Bibliothèque du Roi," par M. Le Prince.

† This Gilles Malet, who was also the king's reader, had great strength of character. He is thus described by Christine de Pise: "Souverainement bien lisoit, et bien ponttoit, et entendens homs estoit," — "He read

care and ingenuity required, he drew up an inventory with his own hand of this royal library. In that early age of book-collecting, volumes had not always titles to denote their subjects, or they contained several in one volume:* hence they are described by their outsides, their size and their shape, their coverings and their clasps. This library of Charles the Fifth shines in extreme splendor, with its many-colored silks and velvets, azure and vermeil, green and yellow, and its cloths of silver and of gold, each volume being distinctly described by the color and the material of its covering. This curious document of the fourteenth century still exists.†

This library passed through strange vicissitudes. The volumes in the succeeding reigns were seized on, or purchased at a conqueror's price, by the Duke of Bedford, Regent of France. Some he gave to his brother Humphrey, the Duke of Gloucester; and they formed a part of the rich collection which that prince presented to Oxford, there finally to be destroyed by a fanatical English mob: others of the volumes found their way back to the Louvre, repurchased by the French at London. The glorious missal that bears the regent's name remains yet in this country, the property of a wealthy individual.‡

sovereignly well, with good punctuation, and was an understanding man." She has recorded a personal anecdote of him. One day, a fatal accident happened to his child; but such was the discipline of official duties, that he did not interrupt his attendance on the king at the usual hour of reading. The king, having afterwards heard of the accident which had bereaved the father of his child, observed, "If the intrepidity of this man had not exceeded that which Nature bestows upon ordinary men, his paternal emotion would not have allowed him to conceal his misfortune."

* The reader may form some idea of the discordant arrangement of a volume of manuscripts by the following entries: "Un Livre qui commence de Genesis, et aussi traite des fais Julius Cesar, appelle Suetoine." "Un Livre en François, en un volume, qui ce commence de Genesis, et traite du fait des Romains, de la vie des SS. Peres Hermites, et de Merlin."

† "Hist. de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions," tome i. 421, 12mo.

‡ It has, within the last few years, been added to the British Museum. — Ed.

Accident has preserved a few catalogues of libraries of noblemen in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, more pleasant than erudite. In the fourteenth century, the volumes consisted for the greater part of those romances of chivalry which so long formed the favorite reading of the noble, the dame, and the damoiselle, and all the lounging damoiseaux in the baronial castle.*

The private libraries of the fifteenth century were restricted to some French tomes of chivalry, or to "a merrie tale in Boccace;" and their science advanced not beyond "the Shepherd's Calendar," or "the Secrets of Albert the Great." There was an intermixture of legendary lives of saints, and apocryphal adventures of "Notre Seigneur" in Egypt, with a volume or two of physic and surgery and astrology.

A few catalogues of our monastic libraries still remain, and these reflect an image of the studies of the middle ages. We find versions of the Scriptures in English and Latin, — a Greek or Hebrew manuscript is not noted down; a commentator, a father, and some schoolmen; and a writer on the canon law, and the mediæval Christian poets who composed in Latin verse. A romance, an accidental classic, a chronicle and legends, — such are the usual contents of these monastic catalogues. But, though the subjects seem various, the number of volumes were exceedingly few. Some monasteries had not more than twenty books. In such little esteem were any writings in the vernacular idiom held, that the library of Glastonbury Abbey, probably the most extensive in England, in 1248, possessed no more than four books in English,† on religious topics; and in the later days of Henry the Eighth,

* *Dame* was the lady of the knight; the *damoiselle*, the wife of an esquire; *dameisel*, or *damoiseau*, was a youth of noble extraction, but who had not yet attained to knighthood. — ROCQUEFORT: *Glossaire de Langue Romane.*

† Ritson's "Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy," lxxxi.

when Leland rummaged the monasteries, he did not find a greater number. The library of the Monastery of Bretton, which, owing to its isolated site, was among the last dissolved, and which may have enlarged its stores with the spoils of other collections which the times offered, when it was dissolved in 1558, could only boast of having possessed one hundred and fifty distinct works.*

In this primitive state of book-collecting, a singular evidence of their bibliographical passion was sometimes apparent in the monastic libraries. Not deeming a written catalogue, which might not often be opened, sufficiently attractive to remind them of their lettered stores, they inscribed verses on their windows to indicate the books they possessed, and over these inscriptions they placed the portraits of the authors. Thus they could not look through their windows without being reminded of their volumes; and the very portraits of authors, illuminated by the light of heaven, might rouse the curiosity which many a barren title would repel.†

To us, accustomed to reckon libraries by thousands, these scanty catalogues will appear a sad contraction of human knowledge. The monastic studies could not in any degree have advanced the national character; they could only have kept it stationary; and excepting some scholastic logomachies, in which the people could have no concern, one monkish writer could hardly ever have differed from another.

The monastic libraries have been declared to have afforded the last asylums of literature in a barbarous era, and the preservation of ancient literature has been ascribed to the monks. But we must not accept a fortuitous occurrence as any evidence of their solicitude or their taste. In the dull

* See an "Essay on English Monastic Libraries" by that learned and ingenious antiquary, the Rev. Joseph Hunter.

† Some of these extraordinary window-catalogues of the monastic library of St. Alban's were found in the cloisters and presbytery of that monastery, and are preserved in the "Monasticon Anglicanum."

scriptorium of the monk, if the ancient authors always obtained so secure a place, they slept in comparative safety; for they were not often disturbed by their first Gothic owners, who hardly ever allude to them. If ancient literature found a refuge in the monastic establishments, the polytheistical guests were not slightly contemned by their hosts, who cherished with a different taste a bastardized race of the Romans. The purer writers were not in request; for, the later Latin verse-makers being Christians, the piety of the monks proved to be infinitely superior to their taste. Boethius was their great classic; while Prudentius, Sedulius, and Fortunius carried the votes against Virgil, Horace, and even Ovid; though Ovid was in some favor for his marvellous romance. The polytheism of the classical poets was looked on with horror, so literally did they construe the allegorical fables of the Latin Muse. Even till a later day, when monkery itself was abolished, the same Gothic taste lingered among us in its aversion to the classical poets of antiquity, as the works of idolaters!

Had we not obtained our knowledge of the great ancients by other circumstances than by their accidental preservation by the monks, we should have lost a whole antiquity. The vellum was considered more precious than the genius of the author; and it has been acutely conjectured, that the real cause of the minor writers of antiquity having come down to us entire, while we have to lament for ever the lacerations of the greater, has been owing to the scantiness of the parchment of a diminutive volume. They coveted the more voluminous authors to erase some immortal page of the lost decades of Livy, or the annals of Tacitus, to inscribe on it some dull homily or saintly legend. That the ancients were neglected by these guardians, appears by the dungeon-darkness from which the Italian Poggio disinterred many of our ancient classics; and Leland, in his literary journey to survey the monastic libraries of England, often shook from the unknown author a whole century of dust and cobwebs. When libraries

became one source of the pleasures of life, the lovers of books appear to have been curious in selecting their site for perfect seclusion and silence amid their noble residences; and also in their contrivances to arrange their volumes, so as to have them at instant command. One of these Gothic libraries, in an old castle belonging to the Percys, has been described by Leland with congenial delight. I shall transcribe his words, accommodating the reader with our modern orthography: —

"One thing I liked extremely in one of the towers: that was a STUDY called PARADISE; where was a closet in the middle of eight squares latticed 'abrate;' and at the top of every square was a desk ledged to set books on, on coffers within them; and these seemed as joined hard to the top of the closet; and yet, by pulling, one or all would come down breast-high in rabbets (or grooves), and serve for desks to lay books on."

However clumsy this invention in "Paradise" may seem to us, it was not more so than the custom of chaining their books to the shelves, allowing a sufficient length of chain to reach the reading-desk; a mode which long prevailed when printing multiplied the cares of the librarian.

All these libraries, consisting of manuscripts, were necessarily limited in their numbers: their collectors had no choice, but gladly received what occurred to their hands. It was when books were multiplied by the press, that the minds of owners of libraries shaped them to their own fancies, and stamped their characters on these companions of their solitude.

We have a catalogue of the library of Mary, Queen of Scots, as delivered up to her son, James the Sixth, in 1578,* very characteristic of her elegant studies: the volumes chiefly consist of French authors and French translations; a variety of chronicles; several romances; a few Italian writers, — Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Ariosto; and her favorite poets, Alain

* Dibdin's "Bibliographical Decameron," iii. 245.

Chartier, Ronsard, and Marot. This library forms a striking contrast with that of Elizabeth of England, which was visited in 1598 by Hentzner, the German traveller. The shelves at Whitehall displayed a more classical array: the collection consisted of Greek, Latin, as well as Italian and French books.

The dearness of parchment, and the slowness of the scribes, made manuscripts things only purchasable by princely munificence. It was the discovery of paper from rags, and the novel art of taking copies without penmen, which made books mere objects of commerce, and dispersed the treasures of the human mind free as air, and cheap as bread.

HENRY THE SEVENTH.

THERE was a state of transition in our literature, both classical and vernacular, which deserves our notice in the progress of the genius of the nation.

A prudent sovereign in the seventh Henry, amid factions rather joined together than cemented, gave a semblance of repose to a turbulent land exhausted by its convulsions. A martial rudeness still lingered among the great; and we discover by a curious conversation which the learned Pace held with some of the gentry, — with whom, perhaps, he had indiscreetly remonstrated, attempting to impress on their minds the advantages of study, — that his advice was indignantly rejected. Such pursuits seemed to them unmanly, and intolerable impediments in the practice of those more active arts of life which alone were worthy of one of gentle blood: their fathers had been good knights without this idling toil of reading.

Henry the Seventh, when Earl of Richmond, during his exile in France from 1471 to 1485, had become a reader of French romances, an admirer of French players, and an amateur of their peculiar architecture. After his accession, we trace these new tastes in our poetry, our drama, and in a novel species of architecture which Bishop Fox called Burgundian, and which is the origin of the Tudor style.* A favorer of the histrionic art, he introduced a troop of French players. Wary in his pleasures as in his politics, this mon-

* Speed's "History," 995.

arch was moderate in his patronage either of poets or players; but he was careful to encourage both. The queen participated in his tastes, and appears to have bestowed particular rewards on "players," whose performances had afforded her unusual delight; and, among the curious items of her majesty's expenditure, we find that many of these players were foreigners, — "a French player, an Italian poet, a Spanish tumbler, a Flemish tumbler, a Welshman for making a rhyme, a maid that came out of Spain and danced before the queen."

This monarch had suffered one of those royal marriages which are a tribute paid to the interests of the State. Henry had yielded with repugnance to a union with Elizabeth the Yorkist: the sullen Lancastrian long looked on his queen with the eyes of a factionist. Toward the latter years of his life, this repugnance seems to have passed away, as this gentle consort largely participated in his tastes. It was probably in their sympathy that the personal prejudices of Henry melted away. This indeed was a triumph of the arts of imagination over the warped feelings of the individual; it marked the transition from barbaric arms to the amenities of literature, and the softening influence of the mimetic arts; it was the presage of the magnificence of his successor. The nation was benefited by these new tastes: the pacific reign made a revolution in our court, our manners, and our literature.

We may date from this period that happy intercourse which the learned English opened with the Continent, and more particularly with literary Italy. Our learned travellers now appear in number. Colet, the founder of St. Paul's School, not only passed over to Paris, but lingered in Italy, and returned home with the enthusiasm of classical antiquity. Grocyn, to acquire the true pronunciation of the Greek, which he first taught at Oxford, domesticated with Demetrius Chalcondyles and Angelo Politian at Florence. Linacre, the projector of the College of Physicians, visited Rome and Florence. Lilly, the grammarian, we find at Rhodes and at

Rome; and the learned Pace at Padua. We were thus early great literary travellers; and the happier Continentalists, who rarely move from their native homes, have often wondered at the restless condition of those whom they have sometimes reproached as being *Insulaires:* yet they may be reminded that we have done no more than the most ancient philosophers of antiquity. Our reproachers fortunately possessed the arts, and even the learning, which we were willing by travel and costs to acquire. "The Islanders" may have combined all the knowledge of all the world, a freedom and enlargement of the mind, which those, however more fortunately placed, can rarely possess, who restrict their locality and narrow their comprehension by their own home-bound limits.

The king, delighting in poetry, fostered an English Muse in the learned rhyme of STEPHEN HAWES, who was admitted to his private chamber for the pleasure which Henry experienced in listening to poetic recitation. It was probably the taste of his royal master which inspired this bard's allegorical romance of chivalry, of love, and of science. This elaborate work is "the Pastime of Pleasure, or the History of Graunde Amour and la bell Pucell, containing the knowledge of the seven sciences and the course of man's life." At a time when sciences had no reality, they were constantly alluding to them; ignorance hardily imposed its erudition; and experimental philosophy only terminated in necromancy. The seven sciences of the accomplished gentleman were those so well known, comprised in the scholastic distich.

In the ideal hero, "Graunde Amour," is shadowed forth the education of a complete gentleman of that day. From the Tower of "Doctrine" to the Castle of "Chivalry," the way lies equally open; but the progress is diversified by many by-paths, and a number of personified ideas or allegorical characters. These shadowy actors lead to shadowy places; but the abounding incidents relieve us among this troop of passionless creatures.

This fiction blends allegory with romance, and science with chivalry. At the early period of printing, it was probably the first volume which called in the graver's art to heighten the inventions of the writer; and the accompanying wood-cuts are an evidence of the elegant taste of the author, although that morose critic of all poesy, honest Anthony à Wood, sarcastically concludes that these cuts were "to enable the reader to understand the story better." This once courtly volume, our sage reports, "is now thought but worthy of a ballad-monger's stall."* "The Pastime of Pleasure" was even despised by that great book-collector, Gen. Lord Fairfax, who, on the copy he possessed, has left a memorandum, "that it should be changed for a better book!" The fate of books vacillates with the fancies of book-lovers and the improvements of a later age. In the days of Fairfax, the gloom of the civil wars annihilated their imaginations.

But the gorgeousness of this romance struck the Gothic fancy of the historian of our poetry, magic, chivalry, and allegory. In the circumstantial analysis of Warton, the reader may pursue his "course of man's life" through the windings of the labyrinth. It seems as if the patience of the critic had sought a relief, amid his prolonged chronicle of obscure versifiers, in a production of imagination, the only

* This forlorn volume of Anthony's "Stalls" is now a gem placed in the caskets of black-letter. This poetic romance, by its excessive rarity, — the British Museum is without a copy, — has obtained most extraordinary prices among our collectors. A copy of the first edition at the Roxburgh sale reached £84, which was sold at Sir M. M. Sykes's for half the price; later editions, for a fourth. A copy was sold at Heber's sale for £25. It may, however, relieve the distress of some curious readers to be informed that it may now be obtained at the most ordinary cost of books. Mr. Southey, with excellent judgment, has preserved the romance in his valuable volume of "Specimens of our Ancient Poets" from the time of Chaucer. It is to be regretted, however, that the text is not correctly printed, and that the poem has suffered mutilation: six thousand lines seem to have exhausted the patience of the modern typographer. [A more perfect and accurate edition, from that printed in 1555, was published by the Percy Society, in 1845, under the editorship of Mr. Thomas Wright.]

one which had appeared since Chaucer, and which, to the contemplative poetic antiquary, showed him the infant rudiments of the future Spenser.

This allegorical romance is imbued with Provençal fancy, and probably emulated the "Roman de la Rose," which could not fail to be a favorite with the royal patron, among those French books which he loved. Fertile in invention, it is, however, of the old stock, — fresh meads and delicious gardens; ladies in arbors; magical trials of armed knights on horses of steel, which, touched by a secret spring, could represent a tourney. We strike the shield at the castle-gate of chivalry; and we view the golden roof of the hall, lighted up by a carbuncle of prodigious size; we repose in chambers walled with silver, and enamelling many a story. There are many noble conceptions among the allegorical gentry. She whom Graunde Amour first beheld was mounted on her palfrey, flying with the wind, encircled with tongues of fire, and her two milk-white greyhounds, on whose golden collars are inscribed, in diamond letters, *Grace* and *Governance*. She is Fame, her palfrey is Pegasus, and her burning tongues are the voice of Posterity! There are some grotesque incidents, as in other romances; a monster wildly created, the offspring of Disdain and Strangeness, — a demon composed of the seven metals! We have also a dwarf, who has to encounter a giant with seven heads; our subdolous David mounts on twelve steps cut in the rock; and, to the surprise of the giant, he discovered in "the boy whom he had mocked" his equal in stature, and his vanquisher, notwithstanding the inconceivable roar of his seven heads!

Warton transcribed a few lines to show this poet's "harmonious versification and clear expression;" but this short specimen may convey an erroneous notion. Our verse was yet irregular, and its modulation was accidental rather than settled. The metrical lines of Hawes, for the greater part, must be read rhythmically: it was a barbarism that even later

poets still retained. He also affected an ornate diction; and Latin and French terms cast an air of pedantry, more particularly when the euphony of his verse is marred by closing his lines with his elongated polysyllables: he probably imagined that the dimensions of his words necessarily lent a grandeur to his thoughts. With all these defects, Hawes often surpasses himself; and we may be surprised, that in a poem composed in the court of Henry the Seventh, about 1506, the poet should have left us such a minutely finished picture of female beauty as he has given of La Pucelle. Hawes had been in Italy, and seems with an artist's eye to have dwelt on some picture of Raphael, in his early manner; or of his master Perugino, in his hard but elaborate style.

"Her shining hair, so properly she dresses,
Aloft her forehead, with fayre golden tresses;
Her forehead stepe, with fayre browés ybent;
Her eyen gray; her nosé straight and fayre;
In her white cheeks, the faire bloudé it went
As among the white, the reddé to repayre;
Her mouthe right small; her breathe sweet of ayre;
Her lippes soft and ruddy as a rose;
No hart alive but it would him appose.
With a little pitte in her well-favoured chynne;
Her necke long, as white as any lillye,
With vaynés blewe, in which the bloude ranne in;
Her pappés rounde, and thereto right pretýe;
Her armés slender, and of goodly bodýe;
Her fingers small, and thereto right longe,
White as the milk, with blewé vaynes among;
Her feet propér; she gartred well her hose.
I never sawe so fayre a créatúre."

The reign of Henry the Seventh was a misty morning of our vernacular literature, but it was the sunrise; and, though the road be rough, we discover a few names by which we may begin to count, as we find on our way a mile-stone, which, however rudely cut, and worn out, serves to measure our distances.

FIRST SOURCES OF MODERN HISTORY.

SOCIETY must have considerably advanced ere it could have produced an historical record; and who could have furnished even the semblance but the most instructed class, in the enjoyment of uninterrupted leisure, among every people? History, therefore, remained long a consecrated thing in the hands of the priesthood, from the polytheistical era of the Roman pontiffs, who registered their annals, to the days that the history of Christian Europe became chronicled by the monastic orders.* Had it not been for the monks, exclaimed our learned Marsham, we should not have had a history of England.

The monks provided those chronicles which have served both for the ecclesiastical and civil histories of every European people. In every abbey, the most able of its inmates, or the abbot himself, was appointed to record every considerable transaction in the kingdom, and sometimes extended their views to foreign parts. All these were set down in a volume reserved for this purpose; and, on the decease of every sovereign, these memorials were laid before the general chapter, to draw out a sort of chronological history, occasionally with

* Archbishop Plegmund superintended the Saxon Annals to the year 891. The first Chronicles, those of Kent or Wessex, were regularly continued by the Archbishops of Canterbury, or by their directions, as far as 1000, or even 1070. — *The Rev. Dr. Ingram's Preface to the Saxon Chronicle.*

These were our earliest Chronicles: the Britons possibly never wrote any.

a random comment, as the humor of the scribe prompted, or the opinions of the whole monastery sanctioned.

Besides these meagre annals, the monasteries had other books more curious than their record of public affairs. These were their leiger-books, of which some have escaped among the few relics of the universal dissolution of the monasteries. In these registers or diaries they entered all matters relating to their own monastery and its dependencies. As time never pressed on the monkish secretary, his *notabilia* runs on very miscellaneously. Here were descents of families, and tenures of estates; authorities of charters and of cartularies; curious customs of counties, cities, and great towns. Strange accidents were not uncommon then; and sometimes, between a miracle or a natural phenomenon, a fugitive anecdote stole in. The affairs of a monastery exhibited a moving picture of domestic life. These religious houses, whose gate opened to the wayfarer, and who were the distributers of useful commodities to the neighboring poor, — for in their larger establishments they included workmen of every class, — did not, however, maintain their munificence untainted by mundane passions. Forged charters had often sealed their possessions, and supposititious grants of mortuary donations silently transferred the wealth of families. These lords of the soil, though easy landlords, still cast an "evil eye" on the lands of their neighbor. Even rival monasteries have fought in meadows for the ownership: the stratagems of war and the battle-array of two troops of cudgelling monks might have furnished some cantos to an epic, less comic, perhaps, than that of "the Rape of the Bucket."

In the literary simplicity of the twelfth to the fourteenth century, while every great monastery had its historian, every chronicle derived its title from its locality; thus, among others, were the Glastonbury, the Peterborough, and the Abingdon Chronicles: and when Leland, so late as the reign of Henry the Eighth, in his search into monastic libraries, dis-

covered one at St. Neot's, he was at a loss to describe it otherwise than as "the Chronicle of St. Neot's." The famous Doomsday Book was originally known as "Liber de Winton," or "the Winchester Book," from its first place of custody. The same circumstance occurred among our neighbors, where *Les grandes Chroniques de Saint Denys* were so called from having been collected or compiled by the monks of that abbey. An abstract notion of history, or any critical discrimination of one chronicle from another, was not as yet familiar even to our scholars; and, in the dearth of literature, the classical models of antiquity were yet imperfectly contemplated.

It is not less curious to observe, that, at a time when the literary celebrity of the monachal scribe could hardly pass the boundaries of the monastery, and the monk himself was restricted from travelling, bound by indissoluble chains, yet this lone man, as if eager to enjoy a literary reputation, however spurious, was not scrupulous in practising certain dishonest devices. Before the discovery of printing, the concealment of a manuscript for the purpose of appropriation was an artifice, which, if we may decide by some rumors, more frequently occurred than has been detected. Plagiarism is the common sin of the monkish chronicler, to which he was often driven by repeating a mouldy tale a hundred times told; but his furtive pen extended to the capital crime of felony. I shall venture to give a pair of literary anecdotes of monkish writers.

Matthew of Paris, one of these chroniclers, is somewhat esteemed, and Matthew of Westminster is censured, for having copied in his "Flores Historiarum" the other Matthew; but we need not draw any invidious comparison between the two Matthews, since Matthew the first had himself transcribed the work of Roger, the Prior of Wendover. The famous "Polychronicon," which long served as a text-book for the encyclopedic knowledge of the fourteenth century, has two names attached to it, and one, however false, which can never be

separated from the work, interwoven in its texture. This famed volume is ascribed to Ranulph, or Ralph Higden of St. Werberg's Monastery, now the Cathedral of Chester. Ralph, that he might secure the tenure of this awful edifice of universal history for a thousand years, most subdolously contrived that the initial letter of every chapter, when put together, signified that Ralph, a monk of Chester, had compiled the work. Centuries did not contradict the assumption; but time, that blabber of more fatal secrets than those of authors, discovered in the same monastery that another brother Roger had labored for the world their universal history in his "Polycratica Temporum." On examination, the truth flashed; for, lo! the peccant pen of Ralph had silently transmigrated the "Polycratica" into the "Polychronicon," and had only laid a trap for posterity by his treacherous acrostics!*

These universal chroniclers usually opened, *ab initio*, with the Creation, dispersed at Babel, reach home, and paused at the Norman Conquest. This was their usual first division: it was a long journey, but a beaten path. Whatever they found written was history to them; for they were without means of correcting their aptitude for credence. Their anachronisms often ludicrously give the lie to their legendary statements.

Most of these monastic writers composed in a debased Latinity of their own, bald and barbarous, but which had

* We have a remarkable instance among the Italian historians of this period. Giovanni Villani wrote about 1330: Muratori discovered that Villani had wholly transcribed the ancient portion of his history from an old chronicle of Malespini, who wrote about 1230, without any acknowledgment whatever. Doubtless Villani imagined that an insulated manuscript, during a century's oblivion, had little chance of ever being classed among the most ancient records of Italian history. Malespini's "Chronicle," like its brothers, was stuffed with fables: Villani was honest enough not to add to them, though not sufficiently so not silently to appropriate the whole chronicle, — the only one Dante read. — *Tiraboschi*, v. 410, part 2d.

grown up with the age: their diction bears a rude sort of simplicity. Yet, though they were not artists, there were occasions when they were inevitably graphic, — when they detail like a witness in court. These writers have been lauded by the gratitude of antiquaries, and valued by philosophical historians. A living historian has observed of them, that "nothing can be more contemptible as compositions; nothing can be more satisfactory as authorities." But it is necessary that we should be reminded of the partial knowledge and the partial passions of these sources of our earlier modern history. Lift the cowl from the historiographers in their cells recording those busy events in which they never were busied, characterizing those eminent persons from whom they were far removed: William of Malmesbury, not one of the least estimable of these writers, confesses that he drew his knowledge from public rumors, or what the relaters of news brought to them.* In some respects, their history sinks to the level of one of our newspapers, and is as liable to be tinged with party feelings. The whole monastery had as limited notions of public affairs as they had of the kingdom itself, of which they knew but little out of their own county.

No monastic writer, as an historian, has descended to posterity for the eminence of his genius; for the same stamp of mind gave currency to their works. Woe to the sovereign who would have clipped their wings! then "tongues talked and pens wrote" monkish. There was a proverb among them, that "the giver is blessed; but he who taketh away is accursed." None but themselves could appeal to Heaven; and for their crowned slaves they were not penurious of their beatitude. They knew to crouch as well as to thunder. They usually clung to the reigning party; and a new party or a change of dynasty was sure to change their chronicling pen. Hall, the chronicler of Henry the Eighth, at the first mo-

* We have an elegant modern version of this monk's history by the Rev. J. Sharpe.

ment when it was allowable to speak distinctly concerning these monkish writers, observed, "These monastical persons, learned and unliterate, better fed than taught, took on them to write and register in the book of fame the arts and doings and politic governance of kings and princes." It seems not to have occurred to the chronicler of Henry the Eighth, that, had not those monks "taken on them to write and register," we should have had no "Book of Fame." It is a duty we owe to truth to penetrate into the mysteries of monkery; but the monks will always retain their right to receive their large claims on our admiration of their labors.

There was also another class of early chroniclers throughout Europe, — men who filled the office of a sort of royal historiographer; who accompanied the king and the army in their progress, to note down the occurrences they deemed most honorable or important to the nation. But incidents written down by a monk in his cell, or by a diarist pacing the round with majesty, would be equally warped by the views of the monastery in the one case, or by a flattering subservience to the higher power in the other.

In this manner, the early history of Europe was written; the more ancient part was stuffed with fables; and, when it might have become useful in recording passages and persons of the writer's own times, we have a one-sided tale, wherein, while half is suppressed, the other is disguised by flattery or by satire. Such causes are well known to have corrupted these first origins of modern history, — a history in which the commons and the people at large had very little concern, till the day arrived, in the progress of society, when chronicles were written by laymen in the vernacular idiom for their nation.

ARNOLDE'S CHRONICLE.

VERY early in the sixteenth century appeared a volume which seems to have perplexed our literary historians by its mutable and undefinable character. It is a book without a title, and miscalled by the deceptive one of "Arnolde's Chronicle, or the Customs of London:" but "the Customs" are not the manners of the people, but rather "the Customs" of the Custom-house; and it in no shape resembles, or pretends to be, "a chronicle." This erroneous title seems to have been injudiciously annexed to it by Hearne the antiquary, and should never have been retained. This anomalous work, of which there are three ancient editions, had the odd fate of all three being sent forth without a title and without a date; and our bibliographers cannot with any certainty ascertain the order or precedence of these editions. One edition was issued from the press of a Flemish printer at Antwerp, and possibly may be the earliest. The first printer, whether English or Flemish, was evidently at a loss to christen this monstrous miscellaneous babe; and ridiculously took up the title and subjects of the first articles which offered themselves, to designate more than a hundred of the most discrepant variety. The ancient editions appeared as "the names of the Baylyfs, Custos, Mayres, and Sherefs of the Cyte of London, with the Chartour and Lybartyes of the same Cyte, &c., &c.; with other dyvers matters good and necessary for every Cytezen to understand and know,"—a humble title equally fallacious with the higher one of a "Chronicle;" for it has described many objects of considerable curiosity, more interesting than

"mayors and sheriffs," and even "the charter and liberties" of "the cyte."

In conveying a notion of a jumble,* though the things themselves are sufficiently grave, we cannot avoid a ludicrous association; yet this should not lessen the value of its information.

A considerable portion of this medley wholly relates to the municipal interests of the citizens of London, — charters and grants, with a vast variety of forms or models of public and private instruments, chiefly of a commercial description Parish ordinances mix with acts of Parliament; and, when we have conned the oath of the beadle of the ward, we are startled by Pope Nicholas's Bull. We have the craft of grafting trees and altering of fruits, as well in color as in taste, close to an oration of the messenger of "the Soudan of Babylon" to the pope in 1488. Indeed, we have many more useful crafts besides the altering of the flavor of fruits, and the oration of the Mahometan to the representative of St. Peter; for here are culinary receipts to keep sturgeon, to make vinegar "shortly," "percely to grow in an hour's space," and to make ypocras, straining the wine through a bag of spices, — it was nothing more than our mulled wine; and further are receipts to make ink and compound gunpowder, to make soap and to brew beer. Whether we may derive any fresh hints from our ancestor of the year 1500, exceeds my judgment: but to this eager transcriber posterity owes one of the most passionate poems in our language; for betwixt "the composition between the merchants of England and the town of Antwerp," and "the reckoning to buy wares in Flanders," first broke into light "A Ballade of the Notbrowne Mayde." Thus, when an indiscriminating collector is at work, one cannot foresee what good fortune may not chance to be his lot.

* In Oldys's "British Librarian," there is an accurate analysis of the work, in which every single article is enumerated.

Warton has truly characterized this work as "the most heterogeneous and multifarious miscellany that ever existed;" but he seems to me to have mistaken both the design of the collector and the nature of the collection. Some supposed that the collector, Richard Arnolde, intended the volume to be an antiquarian repertory; but, as the materials were recent, that idea cannot be admitted: and Warton censures the compiler, who, to make up a volume, printed together whatever he could amass of notices and papers of every sort and subject. The modern editor of "Arnolde's Chronicle" was perplexed at the contents of what he calls "a strange book."

The critical decision of Warton is much too searching for a volume in which the compiler never wrote a single line, and probably never entertained the remotest idea of the printer's press. This book without a name, is, in fact, nothing more than a simple collection, made by an English merchant engaged in the Flemish trade. Nor was such a work peculiar to this artless collector; for, in a time of rare publications, such men seemed to have formed for themselves a sort of library, of matters they deemed worthy of recollection, to which they could have easy recourse.* By the internal evidence, Arnolde was no stranger at Antwerp nor at Dordrecht. Antwerp was then a favorite residence of the English merchants; there the typographic art flourished, and the printers often printed English books: and as this collection was printed at Antwerp by Doesborowe, a Flemish printer, we might incline, with Douce, to infer that the Flemish was the first edition; for it seems not probable that a foreign printer would have selected an English volume, of little interest to foreigners, to reprint; although we can imagine, that from personal consideration, or by the accident of obtaining the manuscript, he might have been induced to be the first publisher. Whoever was the first printer, the collector

* A similar volume to Arnolde's may be found in the "Harl. MSS.," No. 2,252.

himself seems to have been little concerned in the publication, by the suppression of his name, by the omission of a title, by not prefixing a preface, nor arranging in any way this curious medley of useful things, which he would familiarly turn to as his occasions needed; and — if we may compare a grave volume with the lightest — was of that class which ladies call their "scrap-books," and assuredly not, according to its fallacious title, a CHRONICLE.

THE FIRST PRINTED CHRONICLE.

The first chronicle in our vernacular prose, designed for the English people, was the earnest labor of one of themselves, a citizen and alderman, and sometime sheriff of London, — Robert Fabyan. Here, for the first time, the spectacle of English affairs, accompanied by what he has called "A Concordance of Stories," which included separate notices of French history contemporaneous with the periods he records, was opened for "the unlettered who understand no Laten." Our chronicler, in the accustomed mode, fixes the periods of history by dates from Adam or from Brute. He opens with a superfluous abridgment of Geoffry of Monmouth: the "Polychronicon" is one of his favorite sources; but his authorities are multifarious. His French history is a small stream from "La Mere des Chroniques," and other chronicles of his contemporary Gaguin, a royal historiographer who wandered in the same taste, but who, Fabyan had the sagacity to discover, carefully darkened all matters unpleasant to Frenchmen, but never "leaving any thing out of his book that may sound to the advancement of the French nacyon."

It was a rare occurrence in a layman, and moreover a merchant, to have cultivated the French and the Latin languages. Fabyan was not a learned man; for the age of men of learning had not yet arrived, though it was soon to come. At that early day of our typography, when our native annalists lay scattered in their manuscript seclusion, it was no ordinary delving which struck into the dispersed veins of the dim and dark mine of our history. So little in that day was

the critical knowledge of our writers, that Fabyan has "quoted the same work under different appellations:" and some of our historical writers he seems not to have met with in his researches; for the chronicles of Robert of Gloucester and of Peter Langtoft, though but verse, would have contributed some freshness to his own. In seven unequal divisions, the chronicle closes with the days of the seventh Henry. These seven divisions were probably more fantastical than critical: the number was adopted to cheer the good man with "the seven joys of the Virgin," which he sings forth in unmetrical metre, evidently participating in the rapturous termination of each of his own "seven joys."

Our grave chronicler, arrayed in his civic dignities, seems to have provoked the sensitiveness of the poetical critic in Warton, and the caustic wit in Horace Walpole. "No sheriff," exclaims Walpole, "was ever less qualified to write a history of England. He mentions the deaths of princes, and revolutions of government, with the same phlegm and brevity as he would speak of the appointment of churchwardens."

We may suspect that our citizen and chronicler, however he might be familiar with the public acts of royalty, had no precise notions of the principles of their government. We cannot otherwise deem of an historical recorder, whose political sagacity, in that famous interview between our Edward the Fourth and Louis the Eleventh, of which Comines has left us a lively scene, could not penetrate further than to the fashion of the French monarch's dress. He tells us, of "the nice and wanton disguised apparel that the King Louys wore upon him at the time of this meeting, *I might make a long rehearsal*, apparalled more like a minstrel than a prince." Fabyan shared, too, in the hearty "John Bullism" of that day, in a mortal jealousy of the Gaul, and even of his *Sainte Ampoule*. Though no man had a greater capacity of faith for miracles and saints on English ground, yet for those of his neighbors he had found authority that it was not necessary

for his salvation to believe them; and has ventured to decide on one, that "they must be folys (fools) who believe it." Had the *Sainte Ampoule*, however, been deposited in Westminster Abbey for our own coronations, instead of the Cathedral at Rheims for a French king, Fabyan had not doubted of the efficacy of every drop of the holy oil.

But the dotage of FABYAN did not particularly attach to him; and, though his intellectual comprehension was restricted to the experience of an alderman, he might have been the little Machiavel of his wardmote; for he has thrown out a shrewd observation which no doubt we owe to his own sagacity. In noticing the neglect of a mayor in repairing the walls which had been begun by his predecessor, he observes, that this generally happens: for "one mayor will not finish that thing which another beginneth; for then they think, be the deed ever so good and profitable, that the honor thereof shall be ascribed to the beginner, and not to the finisher; which lack of charity and desire of vainglory causeth many good acts and deeds to die, and grow out of mind, to the great decay of the commonwealth of the city." A profound observation, which might be extended to monarchs as well as mayors.

Indulging too often the civic curiosity of "a citizen and alderman," FABYAN has been taunted for troubling posterity. "FABYAN," says Warton, "is equally attentive to the succession of the mayors of London and the monarchs of England. He seems to have thought the dinners at Guildhall and the pageantries of the city companies more interesting transactions than our victories in France and our struggles for public liberty at home."

This seems to be a random stricture. The alderman, indeed, has carefully registered the mayors and the sheriffs of London; and the scientific in "high and low prices" perhaps may be grateful that our pristine chronicler has also furnished the prices of wheat, oxen, sheep, and poultry: but we cannot find that he has commemorated the diversified

forms these took on the solemn tables of the Guildhall; nor can we meet with the pasteboard pomps of city pageants, one only being recorded, on the return of Henry the Sixth from France.

Our modern critic, composing in the spirit of our day, alludes to "the struggle for public liberty;" but "public liberty" must have been a very ambiguous point with the honest citizen, who had been a sad witness to the contests of two murderous families, who had long sought their mutual destruction, and long convulsed the whole land. We may account for the tempered indifference, and "the brief recitals" for which this simple citizen is reproached, who had lived through such changeful and ensanguined scenes, which had left their bleeding memories among the families of his contemporaries.

The faculties of Fabyan were more level with their objects when he had to chronicle the "tempestuous weathering of thunder and lightning," with the ominous fall of a steeple, or "the image of our Lady" dashed down from its roof; or when he describes the two castles in the air, whence issued two armies, black and white, combating in the skies till the white vanished! Such portents lasted much later than the days of Fabyan; for honest Stowe records what had once ushered in St. James's night, when, the lightning and thunder coming in at the south window and bursting on the north, the bells of St. Michael were listened to with horror, ringing of themselves, while ugly shapes were dancing on the steeple. Their natural philosophy and their piety were long stationary: yet even then some were critical in their remarks; for, when Fabyan recorded "flying dragons and fiery spirits in the air," this was corrected by omitting "the fiery spirits," but agreeing to "the flying dragons." Fabyan, however, has preserved more picturesque and ingenious visions in some legends of saints or apparitions, — still delightsome. These legends formed their "Works of Fiction," and were more affecting

than ours; for they were supernatural, and no one doubted their verity.

Our pristine chronicler, as we have seen, has received hard measure from the two eminent critics of the eighteenth century, who have censured as a history that which is none. Chronicles were written when the science of true history had yet no existence: a chronicle then, in reality, is but a part of history. Every fact dispersed in its insulated state refuses all combination; cause and effect lie remote and obscured from each other: disguised by their ostensible pretexts, the true motives of actions in the great actors of the drama of history cannot be found in the chronological chronicler. The real value of his diligence consists in copiousness and discrimination; qualities rather adverse to each other. FABYAN betrays the infirmities of the early chronicler, not yet practised even in the art of simple detail, without distinction of the importance or the insignificance of the matters he records: his eager pen reckoned the number, without knowing to test the weight; to him all facts appeared of equal worth, for all alike had cost him the same toil; and thus he yields an abundance without copiousness. In raising the curiosity which he has not satisfied for us, his mighty tome shrinks into a narrow scope, and his imperfect narratives, brief and dry, offer only the skeletons of history. The mere antiquarian, indeed, prefers the chronicle to the history: the acquisition of a fact with him is the limit of his knowledge; and he is apt to dream that he possesses the superstructure, when he is only at work on the foundations.

The Chronicle of FABYAN attracts our notice for a remarkable incident attending its publication. The Chronicle was finished in 1504, and remained in manuscript during the author's life, who died in 1512. The first edition did not appear till 1516. The cause which delayed the printing of an important work (for such it was in that day) has not been disclosed; yet perhaps we might have been interested to

have learned whether this protracted publication arose out of neglect difficult to comprehend, or from the printer, reluctant to risk the cost, or from any impediment from a higher quarter.

Be this as it may, we possess the writer's genuine work; for the printer, Pynson, was faithful to his author. The rarity of this first edition, Bale, on a loose rumor which no other literary historian has sanctioned, ascribes to its suppression by Cardinal Wolsey, who is represented in his fury to have condemned the volume to a public ignition, which no one appears to have witnessed, for its "dangerous exposition of the revenues of the clergy," which is not found in the volume. FABYAN truly was *ter Catholicus:* he was of the old religion, dying in the odor of sanctity, and was spared the trial of the new. The alderman's voluminous will is now, for us at least, as curious as any thing in his chronicle.* We here behold the play of the whole machinery of superstition, when men imagined that they secured the repose of their souls by feeing priests, and bribing saints by countless masses. This funereal rite was then called "the month's mind," and which, at least for that short period, prolonged the memory of the departed. For this lugubrious performance were provided ponderous torches for the bearers, tapers for shrines, and huge candlesticks, to be kept lighted at the altar. Three trenthalls (that is, thirty masses thrice told) were to be chorused by the Gray Friars; six priests were to perform the high mass, chant the requiem, and recite the *De Profundis* and the *Dirige;* and for nine years, on his mortuary day, he charges his "tenement in Cornhill" to pay for an *Obite!* But not only friars and priests were to pray or to sing for the repose of the soul of Alderman Fabyan: all comers were invited to kneel around the tomb; and, at times, children

* We are indebted to the zealous research of Sir Henry Ellis for the disinterment of this document, as well as for the collations which appear in his edition.

were to be called in, who if they could not read a *De Profundis* from the Psalter, the innocents were to cry forth a *Pater-Noster* or an *Ave!* There was a purveyance of ribs of beef and mutton, and ale, "stockfish, if Lent," and other recommendations, for "the comers to the *Dirige* at night." The alderman, however, seems to have planned a kind of economy in his "month's mind:" for not only was the repose of his soul in question, but also "the souls of all above written;" and these were a bead-roll of all the branches of Fabyan's family.

The Chronicle of FABYAN was not long given to the world, when it encountered the doom of a system at its termination, just before the beginnings of a coming one; that fatal period of a change in human affairs and human opinions, usually described as a state of transition. But, in this particular instance, the change occurred preceded by no transitional approach; for, within the small circuit of thirty years, it seemed as if the events of whole centuries had been more miraculously compressed than any in those "lives of the saints," whose legendary lore, provided the saints were English, Master FABYAN had loved to perpend. It was Henry the Eighth who turned all the sense of our chronicler into nonsense, all his honest faith into lying absurdities, all his exhortations to maintain "religious houses" into treasonable matters.

Successive editors of the editions of 1533, '43, and '55, surpassed each other in watchfulness, to rid themselves of the old song. Never was author so mutilated in parts, nor so wholly changed from himself; and when, as it sometimes happened, neither purgation nor castration availed the reforming critics, the author's sides bore their marginal flagellations. The corrections or alterations were, however, dexterously performed; for the texture of the work betrayed no trace of the rents. The omission of a phrase saved a whole sentence, and the change of an adjective or two set right a

whole character. It is true, they swept away all his delightful legends, without sparing his woful metres of "the seven joys of the Blessed Virgin" and his appreciation of some favorite relics. They disbanded all the saints, or treated them as they did "the holy virgin Edith," of whom FABYAN has recorded that "many *virtues* be rehearsed," which they delicately reduced to *verses*. His Holiness the Pope is simply "the Bishop of Rome;" and on one memorable occasion — the Papal interdiction of John — this "bishop" is designated in the margin, by the reformer, as "that monstrous and wicked beast." The narrative of Becket cost our compurgators, as it has many others, much shifting, and more omissions. In the tale of the hardy and ambitious archbishop, murdered by knightly assassins, Fabyan said, "They *martyred* the blessed archbishop:" our corrector of the press simply reads, "They slew the traitorous bishop." The *omissions* and the commissions in the Chronicle of FABYAN are often amusing, and always instructive; but these could not have been detected but by a severe collation, which has been happily performed. When the antiquary Brand discovered that FABYAN had been "*modernized*" in later editions, his observation would seem to have extended no further than to the style; but the style of FABYAN is simple and clear, even to modern readers. Modernized truly it was; not, however, for phrases, but for notions; not for statements, but for omissions; not for words, but for things.

HENRY THE EIGHTH: HIS LITERARY CHARACTER.

PEACE and policy had diffused a halcyon calmness over the land, and the people now discerned the approach of another era. Henry the Eighth, who appears with such opposite countenances in the great gallery of history, gave the country more glorious promises of an accomplished sovereign than England had yet witnessed; and, however he may appear differently before the calm eye of posterity, the passions of his own times secured his popularity even to his latter days. Youthful, with all its vigorous and generous temper, and not inferior in the majesty of his intellect any more than in that of his person; learned in his closet, yet enterprising in action, — this sovereign impressed his own commanding character on the nation. Such a monarch gave wings to their genius. Long pent up in their unhappy island, they soon indulged in a visionary dominion in France, and in rapid victories in Scotland; insular England once more aspired to be admitted into the great European family of States; and Henry was the arbiter of Francis of France and of Charles of Germany. The awakened spirit of the English people unconsciously was preparatory to the day which yet no one dreamed of. The minds of men were opening to wider views; and he who sate on the throne was one who would not be the last man in the kingdom to be mindless of its progress.

This lettered monarch himself professed authorship, and a sceptre was his pen. When he sent forth a volume which all

Europe was to read, and was graced by a new title which all Europe was to own, who dared to controvert the crowned controversialist, or impugn the validity of that airy title? His majesty alone was allowed to confute himself.* Trained from his early days in scholastic divinity (for he was designed to be an archbishop), the volume, however aided by others, was the native growth of his own mind. The king's taste for this learning was studiously flattered by the great cardinal, who gently recommended to his restless master a perusal of the nineteen folios of Thomas Aquinas, possibly with the hope of fixing the royal fly in the repose of the cobwebs of the schoolmen. Such, indeed, were his habits of study, that he could interest himself in compiling a national Latin grammar, when the schools succeeded to the dissolved monasteries. The grammar was issued as an act of Parliament; no other but the royal grammar was to be thumbed, without incurring the peril of a premunire.†

It is to be regretted that we are supplied with but few literary anecdotes of this literary monarch. Some we may incidentally glean, and some may be deduced from inference. The age was not yet far enough advanced in civilization to enjoy that inquisitive leisure which leaves its memorials for a distant posterity in the court tattle of a Suetonius or the secret history of a Procopius. It has, however, been recorded, that certain acts of Parliament, and proclamations, were corrected by the royal pen, and particularly the first draught of the act which empowered the king to erect bishoprics was written by his own hand; and he was the active editor of

* The manuscript of Henry the Eighth reposes in the Vatican, witnessed by his own hand in this inscription: "Anglorum Rex, Henricus Leoni X. 'mittit hoc opus et fidei testem et amicitiæ.'" — I found this inscription in one of the notes of Selden to the "Polyolbion" of Drayton.

† The famous Grammar of Lilly was the work of a learned association, in which it appears that both the king and the cardinal had the honor to co-operate. Sir Thomas Elyot has designated Henry "as the chief author." — *Preface to the Castle of Health.*

those monarchical pamphlets, as they may be classed, on religious topics, which were frequently required during his reign.

This learned monarch was unquestionably the first patron of our vernacular literature: he indulged in a literary intercourse with our earliest writers, and evinced a keen curiosity on any novelty in the infant productions of the English press. On frequent occasions, he took a personal interest in the success, and even in the concoction, of literary productions. He fully entered into the noble designs of Sir Thomas Elyot to create a vernacular style, and critically discussed with him the propriety of the use of new words "apt for the purpose;" and on one occasion, when Sir Thomas Elyot projected our first Latin dictionary, the king, in the presence of the courtiers, commended the design, and offered the author not only his royal counsel, but a supply of such books as the royal library possessed.

The king was not offended, as were some of the courtiers, with the freedom displayed by Elyot in some of his ethical works. Elyot tells us, "His grace not only took it in the better part, but with princely words, full of majesty, commended my diligence, simplicity, and courage, in that I spared no estate in the rebuking of vice." The king, at the same time that he protected Elyot from his petty critics, rewarded the early efforts of another vernacular author, who had dedicated to him his first work in English prose, by a pension, which enabled the young student, Roger Ascham, to set off on his travels. A remarkable instance of Henry's quick attention to the novelties of our literature appears by his critical conversation with the antiquary, Thynne, who had presented to him his new edition of Chaucer. His majesty soon discovered the novelty of "the Pilgrim's Tale," a bitter satire on the pride and state of the clergy, which at the time was ascribed to Chaucer. The king, pointing it out to the learned editor, observed in these very words: "William

Thynne! I doubt this will not be allowed; for I suspect the bishops will call thee in question for it." The editor submitted, "If your grace be not offended, I hope to be protected by you." The king "bade him go, and fear not!" It is evident that his majesty was "not offended" at a severe satire on the clergy. But even Henry the Eighth could not always change at will his political position: the minister in power may find means to counteract even the absolute king. A great stir was made in Wolsey's parliament; it was even proposed that the works of Chaucer should be wholly suppressed: some good-humored sprite rose in favor of the only poet in the nation, observing that all the world knew that Dan Chaucer had never written any thing more than fables! The authority of Wolsey so far prevailed, that "the Pilgrim's Tale" was suppressed; and it seems that the haughty prelate would willingly have suppressed the editor in his own person THYNNE was an intimate acquaintance of SKELTON, whose caustic rhymes of "Colin Clout" had been concocted at his country-house. THYNNE, in this perilous adventure of publishing "the Pilgrim's Tale," was saved from the talons of the cardinal; for this monarch's royal word was at all times sacred with him.

A literary anecdote of this monarch has been recently disclosed, which at least attests his ardor for information. When Henry wanted time, if not patience, to read a new work, he put copies into the hands of two opposite characters; and, from the reports of these rival reviewers, the king ventured to deduce his own results. This method of judging a work without meditating on it was a new royal cut in the road of literature, to which we of late have been accustomed; but it seemed with Henry rather to have increased the vacillations of his opinions than steadied the firmness of his decisions.

The court of Henry displayed a brilliant circle of literary noblemen, distinguished for their translations, and some by

their songs and sonnets. Parker, Lord Morley, was a favorite for his numerous versions, some of which he dedicated to the king; the witty Wyat, who always sustained the anagram of his name, was a familiar companion; nor could Henry be insensible to the elegant effusions of Surrey, unless his political feelings indisposed his admiration. It was at the king's command that Lord Berners translated the "Chronicles of Froissart," and the volume is adorned by the royal arms. Sternhold, the memorable psalm-inditer, was a groom of the chamber, and a personal favorite with his master; and Henry appointed the illustrious Leland to search for and to preserve the antiquities of England, and invested him with the honorable title of "the King's Antiquary."

Scholars, too, stood around the royal table; and the company at the palace excelled that of any academy, as Erasmus has told us. Learning, patronized by a despot, became a fashionable accomplishment; and the model for the court was in the royal family themselves. It is from this period that we may date that race of learned ladies which continued through the long reign of our maiden queen. Yet, before the accession of Henry the Eighth, half a century had not elapsed, when female literature was at so low an ebb, that Sir Thomas More noticed, as an extraordinary circumstance, that Jane Shore could read and write. When Erasmus visited the English court, he curiously observed that "the course of human affairs was changed: the monks, famed in time past for learning, are become ignorant, and WOMEN LOVE BOOKS." Erasmus had witnessed at the court of Henry the Eighth the Princess Mary and Elizabeth, both of whom held an epistolary correspondence in Latin; the daughter of Sir Anthony Cook, and Lady Jane Grey, versed in Greek; and the Queen Catherine Parr, his fervent admirer for his paraphrase on the four Gospels. Erasmus had frequented the house of the Mores, which he describes as a perfect *musarum domicilium*. The venerable Nicholas Udall, a contemporary, has also left

us a picture of that day: "It is now a common thing to see young virgins so nouzeld (nursed) and trained in the study of letters, that they willingly set all other vain pastimes at nought; reading and writing, and with most earnest study, both early and late." The pliable nobility of Henry the Eighth easily took the bend of the royal family; and among their daughters, doubtless, there were more learned women than are chronicled in Ballard's "Memoirs." Lady Jane Grey, meditating on Plato, was not so uncommon an incident as it appears to us in the insulated anecdote. The learning of that day must not be held as the pedantry of a later; for it was laying the foundations of every knowledge in the soil of England.

The king's more elegant tastes diffused themselves among the finer arts at a time when they were yet strangers in this land. His father's travelled taste had received a tincture of these arts when abroad: in Henry the Eighth they burst into existence with a more robust aptitude. He eagerly invited foreign artists to his court: but the patronage of an English monarch was not yet appreciated by some of the finest geniuses of Italy; we lay yet too far out of their observation and sympathies; and it is recorded of one of the Italian artists, a fiery spirit who had visited England, that he designated us as *quelle bestie Inglesi*. Raphael and Titian could not be lured from their studios and their blue skies; but fortunately a Northern genius, whose name is as immortal as their own, was domiciliated by the liberal monarch, the friend of Erasmus and of More, — Hans Holbein.

Among the musicians of Henry, we find French, Italians, and Germans: he was himself a musician, and composed several pieces which I believe are still retained in the service of the Royal Chapel.* He had a taste for the gorgeous or grotesque amusements of the Continent, combining them with

* Sir John Hawkins's "History of Music," vol. ii.

a display of the fine arts in their scenical effects. One memorable night of the Epiphany, the court was startled by a new glory, where the king and his companions appeared in a scene which the courtiers had never before witnessed. "It was a mask after the manner of Italy, a thing not seen afore in England," saith the chronicler of Henry's court-days. Once, to amaze a foreign embassy, and on a sudden to raise up a banqueting-house, the monarch set to work the right magicians: an architect and a poet, and his master of the revels, were months inventing and laboring. The regal banqueting-house was adorned by the arts of picture and music, of sculpture and architecture; all was full of illusion and reality: the house itself was a pageant to exhibit a pageant. The magnificent prince was himself so pleased, that he anxiously stopped his visitors at the points of sight most favorable to catch the illusion of the perspective. A monarch of such fine tastes and gorgeous fancies would create the artists who are the true inventors.

BOOKS OF THE PEOPLE.

THE people of Europe, who had no other knowledge of languages than their own uncultivated dialects, seem to have possessed what, if we may so dignify it, we would call a fugitive literature of their own. It is obvious that the people could not be ignorant of the important transactions in their own land: transactions in which their fathers had been the spectators or the actors, the sons would perpetuate by their traditions; the names of their heroes had not died with them on the battle-field. Nor would the villain's subjection to the feudal lord spoil the merriment of the land, nor dull the quip of natural facetiousness.

Before the people had national books, they had national songs. Even at a period so obscure as the days of Charlemagne, there were "*most ancient songs*, in which the acts and wars of the old kings were sung." These songs, which, the secretary of Charlemagne has informed us, were sedulously collected by the command of that great monarch, are described by the secretary, according to his classical taste, as *barbara et antiquissima carmina;* "barbarous," because they were composed in the rude vernacular language: yet such was their lasting enegy, that they were, even in the eighth century, held to be "most ancient," so long had they dwelt in the minds of the people! The enlightened emperor had more largely comprehended their results in the vernacular idiom, on the genius of the nation, than had the more learned and diplomatic secretary. It was an ingenious conjecture, that possibly even these ancient songs may in some shape have come down

to us in the elder Northern and Teutonic romances, and the Danish, the Swedish, the Scottish, and the English popular ballads. The kindling narrative, and the fiery exploits which entranced the imagination of Charlemagne, mutilated or disguised, may have framed the incidents of a romance, or been gathered up in the snatches of old wives' tales, and finally may have even lingered in the nursery.

Our miserable populace had poets for themselves, whose looser carols were the joy of the streets or the fields. Unfortunately, we only learn that they had such artless effusions; for these songs have perished on the lips of the singers. The monks were too dull or too cunning to chronicle the outpourings of a people whom they despised, and which assuredly would have often girded them to the quick. A humorous satire of this kind has stolen down to us, in that exquisite piece of drollery and grotesque invention, "the Land of Cokaigne."* They had historical ballads which were rehearsed to all listeners; and it was from these "old ballads, popular through succeeding times," that William of Malmesbury tells us that "he learned more than from books written expressly for the information of posterity," though he will not answer for their precise truth. They had also political ballads. A memorable one, free as a lampoon, made by one of the adherents of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, in the fugitive day of his victory in 1264, occasioned a statute against "slanderous reports or tales to cause discord betwixt king and people," — a spirit which by no means was put down by that enactment.† This was a ballad sung to the people, as appears by the opening line, —

"Sitteth all stille, and harkeneth to me!"

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* Mr. Ellis has preserved it entire, with notes which make it intelligible to any modern reader.

† Percy's "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," ii. 1. "The liberty of abusing their kings and princes at pleasure, assumed by the good people of this realm, is a privilege of very long standing."

This ballad strikingly contrasts with another of unnerving dejection, after the irreparable defeat of the party, and the death of the Earl of Leicester, which, it is remarkable, is written in French; having been probably addressed solely to that discomfited nobility, who would sympathize with the lament.*

The people, or the inferior classes of society, who despised the courtly French then in vogue, formed such a multitude, that it was for them that ROBERT of GLOUCESTER wrote his Chronicle, and that ROBERT of BRUNNE translated the Chronicle of Peter Langtoft and a volume of recreative tales from the French. The people even then were eager readers, or, more properly, auditors; and this further appears in the *naïveté* of our rhymer's prologue to this chronicle. The monk tells us, that this story of England, which he now shows in English, is not intended for the learned, but the illiterate; not for the clerk, but the layman;

"Not for the lerid, but the lewed:" †

and he describes the class, "they who take solace and mirth when they sit together in fellowship," and deem it "wisdom for to witten" (to know) —

"The state of the land, and haf it written."

The Hermit of Hampole expressly wrote his theological poems for the people, for those who could understand only English.

At a period when we glean nothing from any literature of the people, we find that it had a positive existence; for two

* The Political Songs of England have been recently given by Mr. Thomas Wright, to whom our literature owes many deep obligations. [In the series of volumes published by the Camden Society.]

† *Lewed* Mr. Campbell interprets *low*, which is not quite correct. Hearne explains the term as signifying "the laity, layman, and the illiterate." The *layman* was always considered to be *illiterate* by the devices of the monks.

chronicles and a collection of tales and theological poems were furnished for them in their native idiom by writers who unquestionably sought for celebrity. The people, too, had what in every age has been their peculiar property, — all the fragmentary wisdom of antiquity, in those "Few Words to the Wise," so daily useful, or so apt in the contingencies of human life; proverbs and Æsopian fables, delightedly transmitted from father to son. The memories of the people were stored with short narratives; for a startling tale was not easily forgotten. They had songs of trades, appropriated to the different avocations of laborers. These were a solace to the solitary task-worker, or threw a cheering impulse when many were employed together. Such HALL aptly describes as —

"Sung to the wheel, and sung unto the payle." *

These songs are found among the people of every country; and these effusions were the true poetry of the heart, which kept alive their social feelings. The people had even the greater works brought down for them to a diminutive size: the lays of minstrelsy were usually fragments of the metrical chronicles, or a disjointed tale from some romance; † such as the popular Fabliaux, which form the amusing collection of Le Grand.

These proverbs and these fables, these songs and these tales, — all these were a library without books, till the day arrived when the people had books of their own, open to their comprehension, and responding to their sympathies. That

* It is to be regretted that Mr. JAMIESON, in his "Popular Ballads," was unavoidably prevented enlarging this class of his songs. He has given the carols of the *Boatmen*, the *Corn-grinders*, and the *Dairy-women*. — JAMIESON'S *Popular Ballads*, ii. 352. [See also "Curiosities of Literature," vol. ii. p. 315, for an article on Songs of Trades, or Songs of the People. A volume of "Songs of the English Peasantry" was published by the Percy Society; and several others are given, with the tunes, in Chappell's "Popular Music of the Olden Time."]

† Hearne's "Preface to Peter Langtoft's Chronicle," xxxvii.

this traditional literature was handed down from generation to generation, appears from the circumstance, that hardly had the printing-press been in use, when a multitude of "the people's books" spread through Europe their rude instruction or their national humor. They were even rendered more attractive by the expressive woodcuts, which palpably appealed to a sense which required no "cunning" to comprehend. Their piety and their terror were long excited by that variety of Satan and his devils, which were exhibited to their appalled imaginations, — the mouth of hell gaping wide, and the crowd of the damned driven in by the flaming pitchforks. "The Calendar of Shepherds," originally a translation from the French, was a popular handbook, and rich were its contents, — a perpetual almanac, the saints' days, with the signs of the zodiac, a receptacle of domestic receipts, all the wisdom of proverbs, and all the mysteries of astrology, divinity, politics, and geography, mingled in verse and prose. It was the encyclopædia for the poor man, and even for some of his betters.

The courtly favorites of a former age descended from the oriel window to the cottage-lattice: perpetuated in our "chap-books," sold on the stalls of fairs, and mixed with the wares of "the chapman," they became the books of the people. "The Gestes" of Guy of Warwick and Sir Bevis of Hampton, and other fabulous heroes of chivalry, have been recognized in their humble disguise of the "Tom Thumb," and "Tom Hickathrift," and "Jack the Giant-killer," of the people.

In France, their *bibliothèque bleue* — books now in the shape of pamphlets, deriving their name from the color of their wrappers — preserves the remains of the fugitive literature of the people; and in Italy, to this day, several of the old romances of chivalry are cut down to a single paul's purchase, and delight the humble buyers.* Guerin Meschino, of native

* The curious researches of a French antiquary in this class of literature are given in the two octavo volumes entitled "Histoire des Livres Popu-

origin, still retains his popularity. In Germany, some patriotic antiquaries have delighted to collect this household literature of the illiterate. The Germans, who, more than any other nation, seem to have cherished the hallowed feelings of the homestead, have a term to designate this class of literature: they call these volumes *Volksbücher*, or "the people's books."

There existed a more intimate intercourse between the vernacular writers of Germany and our own than appears yet to have been investigated. "The Merry Jests of Howleglas," most delectable to the people from their grossness and their humor, is of German origin; and it has been recently discovered, that "the History of Friar Rush," which perplexed the researches of Ritson, is a literal prose version of a German poem, printed in 1587.* "Reynard the Fox," a most amusing Æsopian history; an exquisite satire on the vices of the clergy, the devices of courtiers, and not sparing majesty itself; an intelligible manual of profound Machiavelism, displaying the trickery of circumventing and supplanting, and parrying off opponents by sleights of wit, — was translated by Caxton from the Dutch.†

This political fiction has been traced in several languages to an earlier period than the thirteenth century. The learned Germans hold it to be a complete picture of the feudal manners; and Heineccius, one of the most able jurists, declares that it has often assisted him in clearing up the jurisprudence of Germany; and that, for the genius of the writer, the volume deserves to be ranked with the classics of antiquity. The writer probably had good reasons for concealing his name; but his intimacy with a court-life is apparent. He has

laires, ou de la Littérature du Colportage" (Paris, 1854), by M. Charles Nisard, who was appointed to the task by a royal commission. — Ed.

* "Foreign Quarterly Review," vol. xviii. [It is reprinted in the first volume of Thoms's "Early English Prose Romances."]

† It has been frequently reprinted, and recently in Germany, as a *livre de luxe*, illustrated with admirable designs by Kaulbach. — Ed.

dexterously described the wiles of Reynard, whose cunning overreached his opponents; his wit, his learning, his humor, and knowledge of mankind, are of no ordinary degree; and this favorite satire contributed, no less than the works of Erasmus, of Rabelais, and of Boccaccio, to pave the way for the Reformation. It was among the earliest productions of the press in Germany and in England, and became so popular here, that on the old altar-piece of Canterbury Cathedral are several paintings taken from this pungent satire. The modern Italian poet, CASTI, seems to have borrowed the plan of his famous political satire, "Gl' Animali Parlanti," from "Reynard the Fox."

The Germans have occasionally borrowed from us, as we also from the Italian jest-books, many of our "tales and quick answers:" the *facetiæ* of Poggius and Domenichi and others have been a fertile source of our own.

All tales have wings, whether they come from the East or the North; and they soon become denizens wherever they alight. Thus it has happened, that the tale which charmed the wandering Arab in his tent, or cheered the Northern peasant by his winter-fire, alike held on its journey toward England and Scotland. Dr. Leyden was surprised, when he first perused the fabliaux of "the Poor Scholar," "the Three Thieves," and "the Sexton of Cluni," to recognize the popular stories which he had often heard in infancy. He was then young in the poetical studies of the antiquary, or he would not have been at a loss to know whether the Scots drew their tales from the French, or the French from their Scottish intercourse; or whether they originated with the Celtic or the Scandinavian, or sometimes even with the Orientalists.

The genealogy of many a tale, as well as the humors of native jesters, from the days of Henry the Eighth to those of Joe Miller (who, as somebody has observed, now, too, begins to be ancient), may be traced, not only to France, to Spain,

and to Italy, but to Greece and Rome, and at length to Persia and to India. Our most familiar stories have afforded instances. The tale of "Whittington and his Cat," supposed to be indigenous to our country, was first narrated by Arlotto, in his "Novella delle Gatte," in his "Facetie," which were printed soon after his death, in 1483: the tale is told of a merchant of Genoa. We must, however, recollect that Arlotto had been a visitor at the court of England. The other puss, though without her boots, may be seen in Straparola's "Piacevoli Notti." The familiar little hunchback of the "Arabian Nights" has been a universal favorite: it may be found everywhere, — in "the Seven Wise Masters," in the "Gesta Romanorum," and in Le Grand's "Fabliaux." The popular tale of Llywellyn's greyhound, whose grave we still visit at Bethgelert, Sir William Jones discovered in Persian tradition; and it has given rise to a proverb, "As repentant as the man who killed his greyhound." In "Les Maximes des Orientaux" of Galland, we find several of our popular tales.

"Bluebeard," "Red-riding Hood," and "Cinderella" are tales told alike in the nurseries of England and France, Germany and Denmark; and the domestic warning to the Lady-bird, the chant of our earliest day, is sung by the nurse of Germany.* All nations seem alike concerned in this copartnership of tale-telling; borrowing, adulterating, clipping, and even receiving back the identical coin which had circulated wherever it was found. Douce, one of whose favorite pursuits was tracing the origin and ramification of tales, to my knowledge could have afforded a large volume of this genealogy of romance; but that volume probably reposes for the regale of the next century, that literary antiquary being deterred by caustic reviewers from the publication of his useful researches.

* Weber. "Brit. Bib.," vol. iv. — The German song of the Lady-bird is beautifully versified in the preface to "German Popular Stories," by the late Edgar Taylor.

The people, however, did not advance much in intelligence, even after the discovery of printing: for new works, which should have been designed for popular purposes, were still locked up in a language which none spoke, and only the scholar read; and this notwithstanding a noble example had been set by the Italians to the other nations of Europe. In the early days of our printing, the vernacular productions of the press were thrown out to amuse the children of society, fashioned as their toys. We have an abundance of poetical and prose *facetiæ*, all of which were solely adapted to the popular taste, and some of the writers of which were eminent persons. Few but have heard of "the Merry Tales of the Madmen of Gotham," and of "Scogin's Jests, full of witty mirth and pleasant shifts." These facetious works are said to be "gathered" by Andrew Borde,* a physician and humorist of a very original cast of mind, and who professedly wrote for "the Commonwealth" (that is, the people) many other works on graver topics, not less seasoned with drolleries. He was the first who composed medical treatises in the vernacular idiom. His "Breviarie of Health" is a medical dictionary,

* A calamity to which wits are incident is that of having their names prefixed to collections to give them currency. I do not know whether this has not happened to our author. "The Merry Tales of the Madmen of Gotham" are, no doubt, of great antiquity: they are characterized by a peculiar simplicity of silliness. "Scogin's Jests," of the sixty which we have, a very few tradition may have preserved: but they must have received, in the course of time, the addition of pointless jests, tales marred in the telling, and some things neither jest nor tale; and it is remarkable that these are always accompanied by an inane moralization, while the more tolerable appear to be preserved in their original condition. Some future researcher may be so fortunate as to compare them with the first editions, if they exist.

John Scogin was a gentleman of good descent, who was invited to court by Edward the Fourth for the pleasantry of his wit: he was a caustic Democritus, and gave rise to a proverbial phrase, "What says Scogin?" If he usually said two-thirds of what is ascribed to him in this volume, he had never given rise to a proverb. "The Merry Tales of the Madmen of Gotham" have been recently reprinted by Mr. Halliwell.

and held to be a "jewel" in his time, as Fuller records. In this alphabetical list of all diseases, his philosophy reaches to the diseases of the mind, whose cure he combines with that of the body; the medicine and the satire often pleasantly illustrating each other. From the "Dietarie of Health" the modern apostles of regimen might expand their own revelations: it contains many curious matters, not only on diet, but on the whole system of domestic economy, even to the building of a house, regulating a family, and choosing a good air to dwell in, &c. Another of his books, "the Introduction of Knowledge," is a miscellany of great curiosity, describing the languages and manners of different countries: in it are specimens of the Cornish, Welsh, Irish, and Scotch languages, as also of the Turkish and Egyptian, and others, and the value of their coins. The apt yet concise discrimination of the national character of every people is true to the hour we are writing.

The writings of Borde incidentally preserve curious notices of the domestic life and of the customs and arts of that period. Whitaker, in his history of Whalley, has referred to his directions for the construction of great houses, in illustration of our domestic architecture. In all his little books, much there is which the antiquary and the philosopher would not willingly pass by.

Andrew Borde was one of those eccentric geniuses who live in their own sphere, moving on principles which do not guide the routine of society. He was a Carthusian friar: his hair-shirt, however, could never mortify his unvarying facetiousness; but, if he ever rambled in his wits, he was a wider rambler, even beyond the boundaries of Christendom, "a thousand or two and more myles;" an extraordinary feat in his day. He took his degree at Montpelier, was incorporated at Oxford, and admitted into the College of Physicians in London, and was among the physicians of Henry the Eighth. His facetious genius could not conceal the real

learning and the practical knowledge which he derived from personal observation. Borde has received hard measure from our literary historians. This ingenious scholar has been branded by Warton as a mad physician. To close the story of one who was all his days so facetious, we find that this Momus of philosophers died in the Fleet. This was the fate of a great humorist, neither wanting in learning or genius.

It is said that such was his love of "the commonwealth," that he sometimes addressed them from an open stage, in a sort of gratuitous lecture, as some amateurs of our own days have delighted to deliver; and from whence has been handed down to us the term of "MERRY-ANDREW."

In the limited circles which then divided society, the taste for humor was very low. We had not yet reached to the witty humors of Shakspeare and Jonson. Sir Thomas More's "Long Story," in endless stanzas, which Johnson has strangely placed among the specimens of the English language, was held as a tale of "infinite conceit," assuredly, by the great author himself, who seems to have communicated this sort of taste to one of his family. Rastall, the learned printer, brother-in-law of More, and, farther, the grave abbreviator of the statutes in English, issued from his press in 1525 "the Widow Edith's Twelve Merrie Gestys." She was a tricking widow, renowned for her "lying, weeping, and laughing;" an ancient mumper, who had triumphed over the whole state spiritual and the temporality; travelling from town to town in the full practice of dupery and wheedling, to the admiration of her numerous victims. The arts of cheatery were long held to be facetious: most of the "Merrie Jests" consist of stultifying fools, or are sharping tricks practised on the simple children of dupery. There is a stock of this base coinage. This taste for dupery was carried down to a much later period; for the "Merrie Conceited Jests of George Peele" and of Tarleton are chiefly tricks of sharpers.

"The Hye Way to the Spyttel Hous," or, as we should say, "the road to ruin," exposes the mysteries and craft of the venerable brotherhood of mendicancy and imposture; their ingenious artifices to attract the eye, and their secret orgies, concealed by midnight: all that flourishes now in St. Giles's, flourished then in the Barbican. Not long after, we have the first vocabulary of cant language, of "the Fraternitye of Vacabondes," whose honorary titles cannot be yet placed in Burke's Extinct Peerage.

There were attacks on the fair sex in those days, which were parried by their eulogies. We seem to have been early engaged in that battle of the sexes, where the perfections or the imperfections of the female character offered themes for a libel or a panegyric. From the days of Boccaccio, the Italians have usually paid their tribute to "illustrious women," notwithstanding the free insinuations of some malicious novelists: that people preceded, in the refinement of social life, the *tramontani*. England and France, in their ruder circle of society, contracted a cynicism, which appears in a variety of invectives and apologies for the beautiful sex.

One of the most popular attacks of this sort was "the School-house of Women;" a severe satire, published anonymously. One of the heaviest charges is their bitter sarcasm on the new dresses of their friends. The author, one Edward Gosynhyll, charmed, no doubt, by his successful onset, and proud in his victory, threw off the mask: mending his ambidextrous pen for "the Praise of all Women," called "Mulierum Pean," he acknowledged himself to be the writer of "the School-house." Probably he thought he might now do so with impunity, as he was making the *amende honorable*. Whether this saved the trembling Orpheus from the rage of the Bacchantes, our scanty literary history tells not; but his defence is not considered as the least able among several elicited by his own attack.

"The Wife lapped in Morels' Skins, or the Taming of a Shrew," was the favorite tale of the Petruchios of those days, where a haughty dame is softened into a degrading obedience by the brutal command of her mate; a tale which some antiquaries still chuckle over, who have not been so venturous as this hero.*

All these books, written for the people, were at length consumed by the hands of their multitudinous readers: we learn, indeed, in Anthony à Wood's time, that some had descended to the stalls; but, at the present day, some of these rare fugitive pieces may be unique. This sort of pamphlet, Burton, the anatomist of melancholy, was delighted to heap together; and the collection formed by such a keen relish of popular humors he actually bequeathed to the Bodleian Library, where, if they are kept together, they would answer the design of the donor; otherwise such domestic records of the humors and manners of the age, diffused among the general mass, would bear only the value of their rarity.

* Several of these pieces are preserved in Mr. Utterson's "Select Pieces of Early Popular Poetry." This attack on women proved not a theme less fertile among our neighbors: how briskly the skirmish was carried on, the notice of a single writer will show: "Alphabet de l'Imperfection et Malice des Femmes, par J. Olivier, licencier aux loix, et en droit-canon," 1617; three editions of which appeared in the course of two years. This blow was repelled by "Defense des Femmes contre l'Alphabet de leur pretendue Malice," by Vigoureux, 1617: the first author rejoined with a "Réponse aux Impertinences de l'Aposté Capitaine Vigoureux," by Olivier, 1617. The fire was kept up by an ally of Olivier, in "Réplique à l'Anti-Malice du Sieur Vigoureux," by De la Bruyere, 1617. At a period earlier than this conflict, the French had, as well as ourselves, many works on the subject.

THE DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED BY A PRIMITIVE AUTHOR.

Sir Thomas Elyot is the first English prose-writer who avowedly attempted to cultivate the language of his country. We track the prints of the first weak footsteps in this new path; and we detect the aberrations of a mind intent on a great popular design, but still vague and uncertain, often opposed by contemporaries, yet cheered by the little world of his readers.

Elyot for us had been little more than a name, as have been many retired students, from the negligence of contemporaries, had he not been one of those interesting authors who have let us into the history of their own minds, and either prospectively have delighted to contemplate on their future enterprises, or retrospectively have exulted in their past labors.

This amiable scholar had been introduced at court early in life: his "great friend and crony was Sir Thomas More;" so plain Anthony à Wood indicates the familiar intercourse of two great men. Elyot was a favorite with Henry the Eighth, and employed on various embassies, particularly on the confidential one to Rome to negotiate the divorce of Queen Katherine. To his public employments he alludes in his first work, "the Governor," which "he had gathered as well of the sayings of most noble authors, Greek and Latin, as by his own experience; he being continually trained in some daily affairs of the public weal from his childhood."

A passion for literature seems to have prevailed over the ambition of active life; and, on his return from his last

embassy, he decided to write books "in our vulgar tongue," on a great variety of topics, to instruct his countrymen. The diversity of his reading, and an unwearied pen, happily qualified, in this early age of the literature of a nation, a student who was impatient to diffuse that knowledge which he felt he only effectually possessed in the degree and in the space which he communicated it.

His first elaborate work is entitled "the Boke of the Governor, devised by Sir Thomas Elyot," 1531; a work once so popular, that it passed through seven or eight editions, and is still valued by the collectors of our ancient literature.

"The Governor" is one of those treatises, which, at an early period of civilization, when general education is imperfect, becomes useful to mould the manners and to inculcate the morals which should distinguish the courtier and the statesman. Elyot takes his future "Governor" in the arms of his nurse, and places the ideal being amid all the scenes which may exercise the virtues, or the studies which he develops. The work is dedicated to Henry the Eighth. The design, the imaginary personage, the author, and the patron are equally dignified. The style is grave; and it would not be candid in a modern critic to observe, that, in the progress of time, the good sense has become too obvious, and the perpetual illustrations from ancient history too familiar. The erudition in philology of that day has become a schoolboy's learning. They had then no other volumes to recur to, of any authority, but what the ancients had left.

Elyot had a notion, that, for the last thousand years, the world had deteriorated, and that the human mind had not expanded through the course of ages. When he compared the writers of this long series of centuries, the babbling though the subtle schoolmen, who had chained us down to their artificial forms, with the great authors of antiquity, there seemed an appearance of truth in his decision. Christianity had not yet exhibited to modern Europe the refined morali-

ties of Seneca, and the curious knowledge of Plutarch, in the homilies of saints and fathers; nor had its histories of man, confined to our monkish annalists, emulated the narrative charms of Livy nor the grandeur of Tacitus. Of the poets of antiquity, Elyot declared that the English language, at the time he wrote, could convey nothing equivalent; wanting even words to express the delicacies, "the turns," and the euphony of the Latin verse.

A curious evidence of the jejune state of the public mind at this period appears in this volume. Here a learned and grave writer solemnly sets forth several chapters on "that honest pastime of dancing," in which he discovers a series of modern allegories. The various figures and reciprocal move ments between man and woman, "holding each other by the hand," indicate the order, concord, prudence, and other virtues so necessary for the common weal. The *singles* and *reprinses* exhibit the virtue of circumspection, which excites the writer to a panegyric of the father of the reigning sovereign. These ethics of the dance contain some curious notices, and masters in the art might hence have embellished their treatises on the philosophy of dance; for "in its wonderful figures, which the Greeks do call *idea*, are comprehended so many virtues and noble qualities." It is amusing to observe how men willingly become the dupes of their fancies by affecting to discover motives and analogies the most unconnected imaginable with the objects themselves. Long after our polished statesman wrote, the Puritan excommunicated the sinful dancer, and detected in the graceful evolutions of "the honor," the "brawl," and the "single," with all their moral movements, the artifices of Satan, and the perdition of the souls of two partners, dancing too well. It was the mode of that age thus to moralize or allegorize on the common acts of life, and to sanction their idlest amusements by some religious motive. At this period, in France, we find a famous *Veneur*, Gaston Phebus, opening his treatise on "hunting" in the spirit that

Elyot had opened to us the mysteries of dancing. "By hunting, we escape from the seven mortal sins; and therefore, the more we hunt, the salvation of our souls will be the more secure. Every good hunter in this world will have joyance, glee, and solace (*joyeuseté, liesse, et deduit*), and secure himself a place in Paradise, not perhaps in the midst, but in the suburbs, because he has shunned idleness, the root of all evil."

"The Boke of the Governor" must now be condemned to the solitary imprisonment of the antiquary's cell, who will pick up many curious circumstances relative to the manners of the age, — always an amusing subject of speculation, when we contemplate on the gradations of social life. I suspect the world owed "the Governor" to a book more famous than itself, — the "Cortegiano" of Castiglione, which appeared two years before the first edition of this work of Elyot, and to whose excellence Elyot could have been no stranger in his embassies to his holiness and to the emperor. But of "the Governor" and "the Cortegiano" what can we now say, but that three centuries are fatal to the immortality of volumes, which, in the infancy of literature, seemed to have flattered themselves with a perpetuity of fame?

It was, however, a generous design, in an age of Latin, to attempt to delight our countrymen by "the vulgar tongue;" but these "first-fruits," as he calls them, gave their author a taste of the bitterness of "that tree of knowledge."

In a subsequent work, "Of the Knowledge which maketh a Wise Man," Elyot has recorded how he had laid himself open to "the vulgar." In the circle of a court there was equal peril in moralizing, which was deemed to be a rebuke, as in applying rusty stories, which were considered as nothing less than disguised personalities. "The Boke" was not thankfully received. The *persifleurs*, those butterflies who carry waspish stings, accounted Sir Thomas to be of no little presumption, that, "in noting other men's vices, he should correct *magnificat*." This odd neologism of "magnificat" was a mystical

coinage, which circulated among these aristocratic exclusives, who, as Elyot describes them, "like a galled horse abiding no plaisters, be always knapping and kicking at such examples and sentences as they do feel sharp or do bite them." The chapters on "the Diversity of Flatterers," and similar subjects, had made many "a galled jade wince;" and, in applying the salve, he got a kick for the cure. They wondered why the knight wrote at all! "Other much wiser men, and better learned than he, do forbear to write any thing." They inscribed modern names to his ancient portraits. The worried author exclaims, "There be Gnathos in Spain as well as in Greece, Pasquils in England as well as in Rome, &c. If men will seek for them in England which I set in other places, I cannot let (hinder) them." But in another work, — "Image of Governance," 1540, — when he detailed "the monstrous living of the Emperor Heliogabalus," and contrasted that gross epicurean with Severus, such a bold and open execration of the vices of a luxurious court could not avoid being obvious to the royal sensualist and his companions, however the character and the tale were removed to a bygone age.

In this early attempt to cultivate "the vulgar tongue," some cavilled at his strange terms. It is a striking instance of the simplicity of the critics at that early period of our language, that our author formally explains the word *maturity*, — "a Latin word, which I am constrained to usurp, lacking a name in English, and which, though it be strange and dark, yet may be understood as other words late comen out of Italy and France, and made denizens among us." Augustus Cæsar, it seems, had frequently in his mouth this word *matura*, — "do maturely!" as "if he should have said, Do neither too much nor too little, too swiftly nor too slowly." Elyot would confine the figurative Latin term to a metaphysical designation of the acts of men in their most perfect state; "reserving," as he says, "the word 'ripeness' to fruit and other things,

separate from affairs, as we have now in usage." Elyot exults in having augmented the English language by the introduction of this Latin term, now made English for the first time. It has flourished as well as this other, "the *redolent* savors of sweet herbs and flowers." But his ear was not always musical, and some of his neologisms are less graceful,—"*an alective*," to wit; "*fatigate*," to fatigue; "*ostent*," to show, and to "*sufficate* some disputation." Such were the first weak steps of the fathers of our language, who, however, culled for us many a flower among their cockle.

But a murmur more prejudicial arose than the idle cavil of new and hard words; for some asserted that "the Boke seemed to be overlong." Our primeval author considered that "knowledge of wisdom cannot be shortly declared." Elyot had not yet attained, by sufficient practice in authorship, the secret, that the volume which he had so much pleasure in writing could be over-tedious in reading. "For those," he observes sarcastically, "who be well willing, it is soon learned; in good faith, sooner than primero or gleek." The nation must have then consisted of young readers, when a diminutive volume in twelves was deemed to be "overlong." In this apology for his writings, he threw out an undaunted declaration of his resolution to proceed with future volumes: "If the readers of my works, by the noble example of our most dear sovereign lord, do justly and lovingly interpret my labors, I, during the residue of my life, will now and then set forth such fruits of my study, profitable, as I trust, unto this my country, leaving malicious readers with their incurable fury." Such was the innocent criticism of our earliest writer: his pen was hardly tipped with gall.

As all subjects were equally seductive to the artless pen of a primitive author, who had yet no rivals to encounter in public, Elyot turned his useful studies to a topic very opposite to that of political ethics. He put forth "the Castle of Health," a medical treatise, which passed through nearly as

many honorable editions as "the Governor." It did not, however, abate the number, though it changed the character of his cavillers, who were now the whole corporate body of the physicians!

The author has told his amusing story in the preface to a third edition, in 1541:—

"Why should I be grieved with reproaches wherewith some of my country do recompense me for my labors, taken without hope of temporal reward, only for the fervent affection which I have ever borne toward the public weal of my country? 'A worthy matter!' saith one. 'Sir Thomas Elyot has become a physician, and writeth on physic, which beseemeth not a knight: he might have been much better occupied.' Truly, if they will call him a physician who is studious of the weal of his country, let men so name me."

But there was no shame in studying this science, or setting forth any book, being—

"Thereto provoked by the noble example of my noble master, King Henry VIII.; for his highness hath not disdained to be the chief author of an introduction to grammar for the children of his subjects.

"If physicians be angry that I have written physic in English, let them remember that Greeks wrote in Greek, the Romans in Latin, and Avicenna in Arabic, which were their own proper and maternal tongues. These were paynims and Jews; but, in this part of charity, they far surmounted us Christians."

Several years after, when our author reverted to his "Castle of Health," the Castle was brightened by the beams of public favor. Its author now exulted that "it shall long preserve men, be some physicians never so angry." The work had not been intended to depreciate medical professors, but "for their commodity, by instructing the sick, and observing a good order in diet, preventing the great causes of sickness, or by which they could the sooner be cured." Our philoso-

pher had attempted to draw aside that mystifying veil with which some affected to envelop the arcana of medicine, as if they were desirous "of writing in cipher that none but themselves could read." Our author had anticipated that revolution in medical science which afterwards, at a distant period, has been productive of some of the ablest treatises in the vernacular languages of Europe.

The patriotic studies of Elyot did not terminate in these ethical and popular volumes; for he had taxed his daily diligence for his country's weal. This appeared in "the Dictionary of Sir Thomas Elyot, 1535," a folio, which laid the foundation of our future lexicons, "declaring Latin by English," as Elyot describes his own labor.

Elyot had suffered some disappointments as a courtier in the days of Wolsey, who lavished the royal favors on churchmen. In a letter to Lord Cromwell, he describes himself with a very narrow income, supporting his establishment, "equal to any knight in the country where I dwell who have much more to live on;" but a new office, involving considerable expense in its maintenance, to which he had been just appointed, he declares would be his ruin, having already discharged "five honest and tall personages." — "I wot not by what malice of fortune I am constrained to be in that office, whereunto is, as it were, appendent loss of money and good name, all sharpness and diligence in justice now-a-days being everywhere odious." And this was at a time when "I trusted to live quietly, and by little and little to repay my creditors, and *to reconcile myself to mine old studies.*"

This letter conveys a favorable impression of the real character of this learned man: but Elyot had condescended abjectly to join with the herd in the general scramble for the monastic lands; and, if he feigned poverty, the degradation is not less. There are cruel epochs in a great revolution; moments of trial which too often exhibit the lofty philosopher shrinking into one of the people. It is probable that he suc-

ceeded in his petition; for I find his name among the commissioners appointed to make a general inquiry after lands belonging to the church, as also to the colleges of the universities, in 1534.

But, in this day of weakness, Elyot sunk far lower than petitioning for suppressed lands. Elyot was suspected of inclining to Popery, and being adverse to the new order of affairs. His former close intimacy with Sir Thomas More contributed to this suspicion; and now, it is sad to relate, he renounces this ancient and honorable friendship! Peter denied his Master. "I beseech your good lordship now to lay apart the remembrance of the amity betwixt me and Sir Thomas More, which was but *usque ad aras*, as is the proverb; considering that I was never so much addicted unto him as I was unto truth and fidelity towards my sovereign lord." Was the influence of such illustrious friendships to be confined to chimney-corners? Had Elyot not listened to the wisdom, and revered the immutable fortitude, of "his great friend and crony"?—he, the stern moralist, who, in his "Governor," had written a remarkable chapter on "the constancy of friends," and had illustrated that passion by the romantic tale of Titus and Gesippus, where the personal trials of both parties far exceed those of the Damon and Pythias of antiquity, and are so eloquently developed and so exquisitely narrated by the great Italian novelist.

The literary history of Sir Thomas Elyot exhibits the difficulties experienced by a primitive author in the earliest attempts to open a new path to the cultivation of a vernacular literature; and it seems to have required all the magnanimity of our author to sustain his superiority among his own circle, by disdaining their petulant criticism, and by the honest confidence he gathered, as he proceeded, in the successive editions of his writings.

SKELTON.

At a period when satire had not yet assumed any legitimate form, a singular genius appeared in Skelton. His satire is peculiar; but it is stamped by vigorous originality. The fertility of his conceptions in his satirical or his humorous vein is thrown out in a style created by himself. The Skeltonical short verse, contracted into five or six and even four syllables, is wild and airy. In the quick-returning rhymes, the playfulness of the diction, and the pungency of new words, usually ludicrous, often expressive, and sometimes felicitous, there is a stirring spirit which will be best felt in an audible reading. The velocity of his verse has a carol of its own. The chimes ring in the ear, and the thoughts are flung about like coruscations. But the magic of the poet is confined to his spell: at his first step out of it, he falls to the earth, never to recover himself. Skelton is a great creator only when he writes what baffles imitation; for it is his fate, when touching more solemn strains, to betray no quality of a poet, — inert in imagination, and naked in diction. Whenever his Muse plunges into the long measure of heroic verse, she is drowned in no Heliconian stream. Skelton seems himself aware of his miserable fate; and repeatedly, with great truth, if not with some modesty, complains of —

"Mine homely rudeness and dryness."

But when he returns to his own manner and his own rhyme, when he riots in the wantonness of his prodigal genius, irresistible and daring, the poet was not unconscious of his faculty; and truly he tells, —

"Though my rime be ragged,
Tattered and jagged,
Rudely rain-beaten,
Rusty, moth-eaten,
If ye take well therewith,
It hath in it some pith."

Whether Skelton really adopted the measures of the old tavern-minstrelsy used by harpers, who gave "a fit of mirth for a groat," or "carols for Christmas," or "lascivious poems for bride-ales," as Puttenham, the arch-critic of Elizabeth's reign, supposes; or whether in Skelton's introduction of alternate Latin lines among his verses he caught the Macaronic caprice of the Italians, as Warton suggests, — the Skeltonical style remains his own undisputed possession. He is a poet who has left his name to his own verse, — a verse airy, but pungent; so admirably adapted for the popular ear, that it has been frequently copied,* and has led some eminent critics into singular misconceptions. The minstrel tune of the Skeltonical rhyme is easily caught; but the invention of style and "the pith" mock these imitators. The facility of doggerel merely

* George Ellis, although an elegant critic, could not relish "the Skeltonical minstrelsy." In an extract from a manuscript poem ascribed to Skelton, "the Image of Hypocrisy," and truly Skeltonical in every sense, he condemned it as "a piece of obscure and unintelligible ribaldry;" and so, no doubt, it has been accepted. But the truth is, the morsel is of exquisite poignancy, pointed at Sir Thomas More's controversial writings, to which the allusions in every line might be pointed out. As these works were written after the death of Skelton, the merit entirely remains with this fortunate imitator.

In the public rejoicings at the defeat of the Armada, in 1589, a ludicrous bard poured forth his patriotic effusions in what he called "a Skeltonical Salutation, or Condign Gratulation," of the Spaniard, who, he says, —

"In a bravado
Spent many a crusado."

In a reprint of the poem of "Elynoure Rummynge," in 1624, which may be found in the "Harl. Miscellany," vol. i., there is a poem prefixed, which ridicules the lovers of tobacco: this anachronism betrays the imitator. At the close, there are some verses from the Ghost of Skelton; but we believe it is a real ghost.

of itself could not have yielded the exuberance of his humor and the mordacity of his satire.

This singular writer has suffered the mischance of being too original for some of his critics; they looked on the surface, and did not always suspect the depths they glided over: the legitimate taste of others has revolted against the mixture of the ludicrous and the invective. A taste for humor is a rarer faculty than most persons imagine: where it is not indigenous, no art of man can plant it. There is no substitute for such a volatile existence; and, where even it exists in a limited degree, we cannot enlarge its capacity for reception. A great master of humor, who observed from his experience, has solemnly told us, that "it is not in the power of every one to taste humor, however he may wish it, — it is the gift of God; and a true feeler always brings half the entertainment along with him."*

Puttenham was the first critic who prized Skelton cheaply: the artificial and courtly critic of Elizabeth's reign could not rightly estimate such a wild and irregular genius. The critic's fastidious ear listens to nothing but the jar of rude rhymes, while the courtier's delicacy shrinks from the nerve of appalling satire. "Such," says this critic, "are the rhymes of Skelton, usurping the name of a poet-laureate; being indeed but a rude rayling rhimer, and all his doings ridiculous, — pleasing only the popular ear." This affected critic never suspected "the pith" of "the ridiculous;" the grotesque humor covering the dread invective which shook a Wolsey under his canopy. Another Elizabethan critic, the obsequious Meres, re-echoes the dictum. These opinions perhaps prejudiced the historian of our poetry, who seems to have appreciated them as the echoes of the poet's contemporaries. Yet we know how highly his contemporaries prized him, notwithstanding the host whom he provoked. One poetical brother† distinguishes him as "the inventive Skelton;"

* Sterne. † Henry Bradshaw. "Warton," iii. 13

and we find the following full-length portrait of him by another: * —

"A poet for his art,
Whose judgment sure was high,
And had great practise of the pen;
His works they will not lie:
His termes to taunts did leane,
His talk was as he wrate,
Full quick of wit, right sharpe of wordes,
And skilful of the state;
. . . . . .
And to the hateful minde,
That did disdaine his doings still,
A scorner of his kinde."

When Dr. Johnson observed that "Skelton cannot be said to have attained great elegance of language," he tried Skelton by a test of criticism at which Skelton would have laughed, and "jangled and wrangled." Warton has also censured him for adopting "the familiar phraseology of the common people." The learned editor of Johnson's "Dictionary" corrects both our critics. "If Skelton did not attain great elegance of language, he, however, possessed great knowledge of it. From his works may be drawn an abundance of terms which were then in use among the vulgar as well as the learned, and which no other writer of his time so obviously (and often so wittily) illustrated. Skelton seems to have been fully aware of the condition of our vernacular idiom when he wrote; for he has thus described it: —

"Our natural tongue is rude,
And hard to be enneude
With polished termes lusty;
Our language is so rusty,
So cankered, and so full
Of frowards, and so dull,
That, if I would apply
To write ordinately,
I wot not where to find
Terms to serve my mind."

* Thomas Churchyard.

It was obviously his design to be as great a creator of words as he was of ideas. Many of his mintage would have given strength to our idiom. Caxton, as a contemporary, is some authority that Skelton improved the language.

Let not the reader imagine that Skelton was only "a rude rayling rhimer." Skelton was the tutor of Henry the Eighth; and one who knew him well describes him as —

"Seldom out of prince's grace."

Erasmus distinguished him "as the light and ornament of British letters;" and one, he addresses the royal pupil, "who can not only excite your studies, but complete them." Warton attests his classical attainments: "Had not his propensity to the ridiculous induced him to follow the whimsies of Walter Mapes, Skelton would have appeared among the first writers of Latin poetry in England." Skelton chose to be himself; and this is what the generality of his critics have not taken in their view.

Skelton was an ecclesiastic who was evidently among those who had adopted the principles of reformation before the Reformation. With equal levity and scorn, he struck at the friars from his pulpit or in his ballad, he ridiculed the Romish ritual, and he took unto himself that wife who was to be called a concubine. To the same feelings we may also ascribe the declamatory invective against Cardinal Wolsey, from whose terrible arm he flew into the sanctuary of Westminster, where he remained protected by Abbot Islip until his death, which took place in 1529, but a few short months before the fall of Wolsey. It is supposed that the king did not wholly dislike the levelling of the greatness of his overgrown minister; and it is remarkable that one of the charges subsequently brought by the council in 1529 against Wolsey — his imperious carriage at the council-board — is precisely one of the accusations of our poet, only divested of rhyme;

whence, perhaps, we may infer that Skelton was an organ of the rising party.

"Why come you not to Court?"—that daring state-picture of an omnipotent minister,—and "the Boke of Colin Clout," where the poet pretends only to relate what the people talk about the luxurious clergy, and seems to be half the reformer, are the most original satires in the language. In the days when Skelton wrote these satires, there appeared a poem known by the title of "Reade me, and be not Wrothe;" a voluminous invective against the cardinal and the Romish superstitions, which has been ascribed by some to Skelton. The writer was WILLIAM ROY, a friar. The genius, though not the zeal, of ROY and SKELTON are far apart,—as far as the buoyancy of racy originality is removed from the downright earnestness of grave mediocrity. Roy had been the learned assistant of Tyndale in the first edition of the translation of the New Testament, and it was the public conflagration at London of that whole edition which aroused his indignant spirit. The satire, which had been printed abroad, was diligently suppressed by an emissary of the cardinal purchasing up all the copies; and few were saved from the ravage:* the author, however, escaped out of the country.

In "the Crown of Lawrell," Skelton has himself furnished a catalogue of his numerous writings, the greater number of which have not come down to us. Literary productions were at that day printed on loose sheets or in small pamphlets, which the winds seem to have scattered. We learn there of

* After the death of the cardinal, it was reprinted, in 1546; but the satire was weakened, being transferred from Wolsey, and wholly laid on the clergy. The very rare first edition is reprinted in the "Harleian Miscellany," by Parke, vol. ix. Tyndale has reproached his colleague with being somewhat artful and mutable in his friendships: but the wandering man proved the constancy of his principles; for, as a heretic, he perished at the stake in Portugal.

his graver labors. He composed the "Speculum Principis" for his royal pupil —

"To bear in hand, therein to read;" —

and he translated Diodorus Siculus, —

"Six volumes engrossed it doth contain."

To have composed a manual for the education of a prince, and to have persevered through a laborious version, are sufficient evidence that the learned Skelton had his studious days as well as his hours of caustic jocularity. He appears to have written various pieces for the court entertainment; but for us exists only an account of the interlude of the "Nigramansir," in the pages of Warton, and a single copy of the goodly interlude of "Magnificence,"* in the Garrick collection. If we accept his abstract personations merely as the names, and not the qualities, of the dramatic personages, "Magnificence" approaches to the true vein of comedy.

Skelton was, however, probably more gratified by his own Skeltonical style, moulding it with the wantonness of power on whatever theme, comic or serious. In a poem remarkable for its elegant playfulness, a very graceful maiden, whose loveliness the poet has touched with the most vivid coloring, grieving over the fate of her sparrow from its feline foe, chants a dirige, a Paternoster, and an Ave Maria, for its soul, and the souls of all sparrows. In this discursive poem, which glides from object to object, in the vast abundance of fancy, a general mourning of all the birds in the air, and many allusions to the old romances, "Philip Sparrow," for its elegance, may be placed by the side of "Lesbia's Bird," and, for its playfulness, by the "Vert Vert" of Gresset.

But Skelton was never more vivid than in his "Ale-wife," and all —

"The mad mummyng
Of Elynour Rummyng," —

* It has passed through a reprint by the Roxburgh Club.

a piece which has been more frequently reprinted than any of his works. It remains a morsel of poignant relish for the antiquary, still enamoured of the portrait of this grisly dame of Leatherhead, where her name and her domicile still exist. Such is the immortality a poet can bestow.* "The Tunnyng of Elynoure Rummyng" is a remarkable production of THE GROTESQUE, or the low burlesque; the humor as low as you please, but as strong as you can imagine. Cleland is reported, in Spence's Anecdotes of Pope, to have said that this "Tunnyng of Elynoure Rummyng" was taken from a poem of Lorenzo de' Medici. There is indeed a jocose satire by that noble bard, entitled "I Beoni," "the Topers;" an elegant piece of playful humor, where the characters are a company of thirsty souls hastening out of the gates of Florence to a treat of excellent wine. It was printed by the Giunti, in 1568;† and therefore this burlesque piece could never have been known to Skelton. The manners of our Alewife and her gossips are purely English, and their contrivances to obtain their potations such as the village of Leatherhead would afford.

The latest edition of Skelton was published in the days of Pope, which occasioned some strictures in conversation from the great poet. The laureated poet of Henry the Eighth is styled "beastly:" probably Pope alluded to this minute portrait of "Elynoure Rummynge" and her crowd of customers. Beastliness should have been a delicate subject for censure from Pope. But surely Pope had never read Skelton; for could that great poet have passed by the playful graces of

* A noble amateur laid on the shrine of this antiquated beauty £20 to possess her rare portrait; and, on the republication of this portrait, Steevens wrote some sarcastic verses on the print-collectors in the "European Mag.," 1794: they show this famous commentator to have been a polished wit, though he pronounced the Sonnets of Shakspeare unreadable. These verses have been reprinted in Dibdin's "Bibliomania."

† Roscoe's "Lorenzo de' Medici," i. 290.

"Philip Sparrow" only to remember the broad gossips of "Elynoure Rummyng"?

The amazing contrast of these two poems is the most certain evidence of the extent of the genius of the poet: he who with copious fondness dwelt on a picture which rivals the gracefulness of Albano, could with equal completeness give us the drunken gossipers of an Ostade. It is true, that in the one we are more than delighted, and in the other we are more than disgusted; but, in the impartiality of philosophical criticism, we must award that none but the most original genius could produce both. It is this which entitles our bard to be styled the "inventive Skelton."

But are personal satires and libels of the day deserving the attention of posterity? I answer, that for posterity there are no satires nor libels. We are concerned only with human nature. When the satirical is placed by the side of the historical character, they reflect a mutual light. We become more intimately acquainted with the great cardinal by laying together the satire of the mendacious Skelton with the domestic eulogy of the gentle Cavendish. The interest which posterity takes is different from that of contemporaries; our vision is more complete: they witnessed the beginnings, but we behold the ends. We are no longer deceived by hyperbolical exaggeration, or inflamed by unsparing invective: the ideal personage of the satirist is compared with the real one of the historian, and we touch only delicate truths. What Wolsey was, we know; but how he was known to his own times, and to the people, we can only gather from the private satirist: corrected by the passionless arbiter of another age, the satirist becomes the useful historian of the man.

The extraordinary combination in the genius of Skelton was that of two most opposite and potent faculties, — the hyperbolical ludicrous masking the invective. He acts the character of a buffoon; he talks the language of drollery; he

even mints a coinage of his own, to deepen the colors of his extravagance: and all this was for the people! But his hand conceals a poniard; his rapid gestures only strike the deeper into his victim, and we find that the Tragedy of the State has been acted while we were only lookers-on before a stage erected for the popular gaze.*

* The first collection of some of the works of Skelton was made by Thomas Marshe, in 1568. Another edition, by an unknown editor, was in 1736; the text of which is, as Gifford justly observed, execrable. Many of his writings still remain in their manuscript state (see Harleian MSS. 367, 2,252), and many printed ones have not been collected. There is no task in our literature so desperately difficult as that of offering a correct text of this anomalous poet; but we may hope to receive it from the diligent labors of Mr. Dyce, so long promised: it would form one of the richest volumes of the Camden publications. [Since this note was written, the poetical works of Skelton have been published by the Rev. A. Dyce (2 vols. 8vo, T. Rodd, 1843), with an abundance of elucidatory notes and bibliographical information: so that this difficult task has been performed with great success; and the volumes are among the most valuable of the many works of that conscientious editor.]

THE SHIP OF FOOLS.

THE "Stultifera Navis," or "Ship of Fools," composed in verse by Sebastian Brandt, a learned German civilian, is a general satire on society. It has been translated into verse, or turned into prose, in almost every European language; and no work of such dimensions has been made so familiar to general readers.

There are works whose design displays the most striking originality; but, alas! there are so many infelicitous modes of execution! To freight a ship with fools, collected from all the classes and professions of society, would have been a creative idea in the brain of Lucian, or another pilgrimage for the personages of Chaucer; and natural or grotesque incidents would have started from the invention of Rabelais. These men of genius would have sportively navigated their "Ship," and not have driven aboard fool after fool, an undistinguishable shoal, by the mere brutal force of the pen, only to sermonize with a tedious homily or a tritical declamation. Erasmus playfully threw out a small sparkling volume on folly, which we still open: Brandt furnishes a massive tome, with fools huddled together; and, while we lose our own, we are astonished at his patience.

The severity of this decision, we own, is that of a critic of the nineteenth century on an author of the sixteenth.

It is amusing to observe the perplexities of an eminent French critic, Monsieur Guizot, in his endeavor to decide on

the "Stultifera Navis." A critic of his school could not rightly comprehend how it happened that so dull a book had been a popular one, multiplied by editions in all the languages of Europe. "It is," says M. Guizot, "a collection of extravagant or of gross *plaisanteries*, which may have been poignant at their time, but which at this day have no other merit than that of having had great success three hundred years ago." The salt of plaisanteries cannot be damped by three centuries, provided they were such. But our author is by no means facetious; he is much too downright; the tone is invariably condemnatory or exhortative: and the Proverbs, the Psalms, and Jeremiah are more frequently appealed to than Cicero, Horace, and Ovid, who occasionally show their heads in his margin.

We must look somewhat deeper, would we learn why a book which now tries our patience was not undeserving of those multiplied editions which have ascertained its popularity.

At the period when this volume appeared, we in the North were far removed from the urbanity and the elevated ethics of lettered Italy. Brandt took this general view of society at the time when the illustrious Castiglione was an ambassador to our Henry the Seventh, and was meditating to model the manners of his countrymen by his "Libro dell' Cortigiano;" and La Casa, by his "Galateo," was founding a code of minute politeness. But neither France nor Germany nor England had yet greatly advanced in the civil intercourse of life, and could not appreciate such exility of elegance and such sublimated refinement. With us, the staple of our moral philosophy was of a homespun but firm texture, and had in it more of yarn than of silk. Men had little to read: they were not weary of that eternal iteration of admonition on whatever was most painful or most despicable in their conduct; their ideas were uncertain, and their minds remained to be developed; nothing was trite or trivial. In his wide survey of human

life, the author addressed the mundane fools of his age in the manner level to their comprehension: the ethical character of the volume was such, that the Abbot Trithemus designated it as a divine book; and in this volume, which read like a homily, while every man beheld the reflection of his own habits and thoughts, he chuckled over the sayings and doings of his neighbors. If any one quipped the profession of another, the sufferer had only to turn the leaf to find ample revenge; and these were the causes of the uninterrupted popularity of this ethical work.

"The Ship of Fools" is, indeed, cumbrous, rude, and inartificial, and was not constructed on the principles which regulate our fast-sailing vessels; yet it may be prized for something more than its curiosity. It is an ancient satire of that age of simplicity which must precede an age of refinement.

If man in society changes his manners, he cannot vary his species: man remains nothing but man; for, however disguised by new modes of acting, the same principles of our actions are always at work. The same follies and the same vices in their result actuate the human being in all ages; and he who turns over the volume of the learned civilian of Germany will find detailed those great moral effects in life, which, if the modern moralist may invest with more dignity, he could not have discovered with more truth. We have outgrown his counsels, but we never shall elude the vexatious consequences of his experience; and many a chapter in the "Ship of Fools" will point many an argument *ad hominum*, and awaken in the secret hours of our reminiscences the pang of contrite sorrows, or tingle our cheek with a blush for our weaknesses. The truths of human nature are ever echoing in our breasts.

"The Ship of Fools," by Alexander Barclay, — a volume of renown among literary antiquaries, and of rarity and price, — is at once a translation and an original. In octave stanza,

flowing in the ballad measure, Barclay has a natural construction of style still retaining a vernacular vigor. He is noticed by Warton for having contributed his share in the improvement of English phraseology; and, indeed, we are often surprised to discover many felicities of our native idiom; and the work, though it should be repulsive to some for its black-letter, is perfectly intelligible to a modern reader. The verse, being prosaic, preserves its colloquial ease, though with more gravity than suits sportive subjects: we sometimes feel the tediousness of the good sense of the priest of St. Mary Ottery.

The edition of 1570 of the "Ship of Fooles"* contains other productions of Barclay. In his "Eclogues,"† our good priest, who did not write, as he says, "for the laud of man," indulged his ethical and theological vein in pastoral poetry; and the interlocutors are citizens disputing with men of the country, and poets with their patrons. To have converted shepherds into scholastic disputants or town-satirists was an unnatural change: but this whimsical taste had been introduced by Petrarch and Mantuan; and the first eclogues in the English language, which Warton tells us are those of Barclay, took this strange form, — an incongruity our Spenser had not the skill to avoid, and for which Milton has been censured. The less fortunate anomalies of genius are often perpetuated by the inconsiderate imitation of those who should be most sensible of their deformity.

In the eclogues of Barclay, the country is ever represented in an impoverished, depressed state; and the splendor of the city, and the luxurious indulgence of the citizen and the

* The woodcuts in this edition are wretched; though in part they are copied from the fine specimens of the art which embellish the Latin version of Locherus.

† One of these, a "Dialogue between a Citizen and Uplandishman," has been reprinted by the Percy Society, under the editorship of Mr. Fairholt, who has given a digest of the other Eclogues in a Preface. — Ed.

courtier, offer a singular contrast to the extreme misery of the agriculturist. We may infer that the country had been deplorably ravaged or neglected in the civil wars, which, half a century afterwards, was to be covered by the fat beeves of the graziers of Elizabeth.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTER OF SIR THOMAS MORE.

If the art of biography be the development of "the ruling passion," it is in strong characters that we must seek for the single feature. Learned and meditative as was Sir Thomas More, a jesting humor, a philosophical jocundity, indulged on important as well as on ordinary occasions, served his wise purpose. He seems to have taken refuge from the follies of other men by retreating to the pleasantry of his own. Grave men censured him for the absence of all gravity; and some imagined that the singularity of his facetious disposition, which sometimes seemed even ludicrous, was carried on to affectation. It was certainly inherent; it was a constitutional temper; it twined itself in his fibres; it betrayed itself on his countenance. We detect it from the comic vein of his boyhood, when among the players; we pursue it through the numerous transactions of his life; and we leave him at its last solemn close, when life and death were within a second of each other, uttering three jests upon the scaffold. Even when he seemed to have quitted the world, and had laid his head on the block, he bade the executioner stay his hand till he had removed his beard; observing, "that that had never committed any treason."

This mirthful mind had, indeed, settled on his features. Erasmus, who has furnished us with an enamelled portrait of More, among its minuter touches reluctantly confessed that "the countenance of Sir Thomas More was a transcript of his mind, inclining to an habitual smile;" and he adds,

"Ingenuously to confess the truth, that face is formed for the expression of mirth rather than of gravity or dignity." But, lest he should derange the gravity of the German to whom he was writing, Erasmus cautiously qualifies the disparaging delineation, — "though as far as possible removed from folly or buffoonery." More, however, would assume a solemn countenance when on the point of throwing out some facetious stroke. He has so described himself when an interlocutor in one of his dialogues addresses him: "You use to look so sadly when you mean merrily, that many times men doubt whether you speak in sport when you mean good earnest."*

The unaffected playfulness of the mind; the smile whose sweetness allayed the causticity of the tongue; the tingling pleasantry when pointed at persons; the pungent raillery which corrected opinions without scorn or contumely; and the art of promptly amusing the mind of another by stealing it away from a present object, — appeared not only in his conversations, but was carried into his writings.

The grave and sullen pages of the polemical labors of More, whose writings chiefly turn on the controversies of the Romanists and the Reformers, are perhaps the only controversial ones which exhibit in the marginal notes, frequently repeated, "a merrie tale." "A merry tale cometh never amiss to me," said More truly of himself. He has offered an apology for introducing this anomalous style into these controversial works. He conceived, that, as a layman, it better became him "to tell his mind merrily than more solemnly to preach." Jests, he acknowledges, are but sauce; and "it were but an absurd banquet, indeed, in which there were few dishes of meat, and much variety of sauces; but that is but an unpleasant one where there were no sauce at all."

The massive folio of Sir Thomas More's "English

* "Sir Thomas More's Workes," 127.

Works" * remains a monument of our language at a period of its pristine vigor. Viewed in active as well as in contemplative life, at the bar or on the beach, as ambassador or chancellor, and not to less advantage, where, "a good distance from his house at Chelsea, he builded the new building, wherein was a chapel, a library, and a gallery," the character, the events, and the writings of this illustrious man may ever interest us.

These works were the fertile produce of "those spare hours for writing, stolen from his meat and sleep." We are told, that, "by using much writing, towards his latter end he complained of the ache of his breast." He has himself acknowledged, that "those delicate dainty folk, the evangelical brethren" (so More calls our early reformers), "think my works too long; for every thing that is, they think too long." More alludes to the rising disposition in men for curtailing all forms and other ceremonial acts, especially in the church service.

More, however skilful as a Latin scholar, to promulgate his opinions aimed at popularity, and cultivated our vernacular idiom, till the English language seems to have enlarged the compass of its expression under the free and copious vein of the writer. It is only by the infecility of the subjects which constitute the greater portion of this mighty volume, that its author has missed the immortality which his genius had else secured.

More has been fortunate in the zeal of his biographers; but we are conscious, that, had there been a Xenophon or a Boswell among them, they could have told us much more. The conversations of Sir Thomas More were racy. His was that rare gift of nature, perfect presence of mind, deprived of which the fullest is but slow and late. His

* "The Workes of Sir Thomas More in the English Tongue, 1557, fo.," a venerable folio of nearly 1500 pages in double columns, is closely printed in black-letter.

conversancy with public affairs, combined with a close observation of familiar life, ever afforded him a striking aptitude of illustration; but the levity of his wit, and the luxuriance of his humor, could not hide the deep sense which at all times gave weight to his thoughts, and decision to his acts. Of all these we are furnished with ample evidence.

Domestic affection in all its *naïve* simplicity dictated the artless record of Roper, the companion of More, for sixteen years, and the husband of his adored daughter Margaret.* The pride of ancestry in the pages of his great-grandson, the ascetic Cresacre More, could not borrow the charm of that work whence he derived his enlarged narrative.† More than one beadsman, the votaries of their martyr, have consecrated his memory even with their legendary faith;‡ while recent and more philosophical writers have expatiated on the wide theme, and have repeated the story of this great Chancellor of England.§

"The child here waiting at table, whomever shall live to see it, will prove a marvellous man." It was thus that the

* Roper's "Life of Sir Thomas More," which had been suppressed through the reign of Elizabeth, only first appeared in 1626, at Paris, when a Roman-Catholic princess in the person of Henrietta, the queen of Charles the First, had ascended the throne of England: it was republished in 1729. There is also an elegant modern reprint by Mr. Singer.

† The Life by his great-grandson was printed in 1627, and republished in 1726. This biography is the one usually referred to. Though with a more lucid arrangement and a fuller narrative than Roper's Life, the writer inherited little of the family genius, except the bigotry of his great ancestor.

‡ *Tres Thomæ.* The three Thomases are Aquinas, à Becket, and More, by Dr. Thomas Stapleton. Another Life by J. H. is an abridgment, 1662. These writers, Romanists, as well as the great-grandson, have interspersed in their narrative more than one of those fabulous incidents and pious frauds, visions and miracles, which have been the opprobrium of Catholic biographers.

§ Macdiarmid, in his "Lives of British Statesmen," has chiefly considered the political character of this lord-chancellor. Others have written Lives merely as accompaniments to the editions of some of his works.

early patron of More, Cardinal Morton, sagaciously contemplated on the precocity of More's boyhood. His prompt natural humor broke out at the Christmas revels, when the boy, suddenly slipping in among the players, acted an extempore part of his own invention. Yet this jocund humor, which never was to quit him to his last awful minute, at times indulged a solemnity of thought, as remarkable in a youth of eighteen. In the taste of that day, he invented an allegorical pageant. These pageants consisted of paintings on rolls of cloth, with inscriptions in verse, descriptive of the scenical objects. They formed a series of the occupations of childhood, manhood, the indolent liver, "a child again," and old age, thin and hoar, wise and discreet. The last scenes exhibited more original conceptions. The image of DEATH, where under his "misshapen feet" lay the sage old man: then came "the Lady FAME," boasting that she had survived death, and would preserve the old man's name "by the voice of the people." But FAME was followed by TIME, "the lord of every hour, the great destroyer both of sea and land," deriding simple "Fame;" for "who shall boast an eternal name before me?" Yet was there a more potent destroyer than TIME: Time itself was mortal! and the eighth pageant revealed the triumph of ETERNITY. The last exhibited the poet himself, meditating in his chair, — he "who had fed their eyes with these fictions and these figures." The allegory of Fame, Time, and Eternity, is a sublime creation of ideal personifications. The conception of these pageants reminds one of the allegorical "Trionfi" of Petrarch; but they are not borrowed from the Italian poet. They were, indeed, in the taste of the age, and such pageants were exhibited in the streets; but the present gorgeous invention, as well as the verses, were the fancies of the youthful More.

MORE in his youth was a true poet; but in his active life he soon deserted these shadows of the imagination.

A modern critic has regretted, that, notwithstanding the

zeal of his biographers, we would gladly have been better acquainted with MORE's political life, his parliamentary speeches, his judicial decrees, and his history as an ambassador and a courtier.

There is not, however, wanting the most striking evidence of MORE's admirable independence in all these characters. I fix on his parliamentary life.

As a burgess under Henry the Seventh, he effectually opposed a royal demand for money. When the king heard that "a beardless boy had disappointed all his purpose," the malice of royalty was wreaked on the devoted head of the judge his father, in a causeless quarrel and a heavy fine. When MORE was chosen the Speaker of the Commons, he addressed Henry the Eighth on the important subject of *freedom of debate*. There is a remarkable passage on the heat of discussion, and the diversity of men's faculties, which displays a nice discrimination in human nature: "Among so many wise men, neither is every one wise alike; nor, among so many alike well-witted, every man alike well-spoken; and it often happeneth, that likewise as much folly is uttered with painted, polished speeches, so many boisterous and rude in language see deep indeed, and give right substantial counsel. And since also in matters of great importance the mind is so often occupied in the matter, that a man rather studies what to say than how, by reason whereof the wisest man and best-spoken in a whole country fortuneth, while his mind is fervent in the matter, somewhat to speak in such wise as he would afterward wish to have been uttered otherwise; and yet no worse will had he when he spake it, than he had when he would gladly change it."

Once the potent cardinal, irritated at the free language of the Commons, to awe the House, came down in person amid the blazonry of all the insignia of his multiform state. To check his arrogance, it was debated whether the minister should be only admitted with a few lords. MORE suggested,

that, as WOLSEY had lately taxed the lightness of their tongues, "it would not be amiss to receive him in all his pomp, with his (silver) pillars, emblems of his ecclesiastical power, as a pillar of the church, his maces, his pole-axes, his crosses, his hat, and his great seal too, to the intent, that, if he find the like fault with us hereafter, we may the more boldly lay the blame on those his grace brings with him." The cardinal made a solemn oration; and, when he ceased, behold the whole house was struck by one unbroken and dead silence! The minister addressed several personally, — each man was a mute: discovering that he could not carry his point by his presence, he seemed to recollect that the custom of the House was to speak by the mouth of their Speaker; and WOLSEY turned to him. MORE, in all humility, explained the cause of the universal silence, by the amazement of the House at the presence of so noble a personage; "besides, that it was not agreeable to the liberty of the House to offer answers; that he himself could return no answer, except every one of the members could put into his head their several wits." The minister abruptly rose, and departed *re infectâ*. Shortly after, WOLSEY in his gallery at Whitehall told MORE, "Would to God you had been at Rome, Mr. More, when I made you Speaker!" — "So would I too!" replied MORE; and then immediately exclaimed, "I like this gallery much better than your gallery at Hampton Court;" and thus, talking of pictures, he broke off "the cardinal's displeasant talk."

This was a customary artifice with MORE. He withdrew the mind from disturbing thoughts by some sudden exclamation, or broke out into some facetious sally, which gave a new turn to the conversation. Of many, to give a single instance. On the day he resigned the chancellorship, he went after service to his wife's pew: there bowing, in the manner and with the very words the lord-chancellor's servant was accustomed to announce to her, that "My lord was gone!" she

laughed at the idling mockery; but when assured, in sober sadness, that "My lord was gone!" this good sort of lady, with her silly exclamation of "Tilly-valley, tilly-valley!—will you sit and make goslings in the ashes?" broke out into one of those domestic explosions to which she was very liable, The resigned chancellor, now resigned in more than one sense, to allay the storm he had raised, desired his daughters to observe whether they could not see some fault in their mother's dress. They could discover none. "Don't you perceive that your mother's nose stands somewhat awry?" Thus, by a stroke of merriment, he dissipated the tedious remonstrances and perplexing inquiries which a graver man could not have eluded.

At the most solemn moments of his life, he was still disposed to indulge his humor. When in the Tower, denied pen and ink, he wrote a letter to his beloved Margaret, and tells her that "this letter is written with a coal; but that, to express his love, a peck of coals would not suffice."

His political sagacity equalled the quickness of his wit or the flow of his humor. He knew to rate at their real value the favors of such a sovereign as Henry VIII. The king suddenly came to dine at his house at Chelsea, and, while walking in the garden, threw his arm about the neck of the chancellor. Roper, his son-in-law, congratulated More on this affectionate familiarity of royalty. More observed, "Son, the king favors me as (much as) any subject within the realm: howbeit, I have no cause to be proud thereof; for, if my head would win him a castle in France, it should not fail to go!"

More seems to have descried the speck of the Reformation, while others could not view even the gathering cloud in the political horizon. He and Roper were conversing on their "Catholic prince, their learned clergy, their sound nobility, their obedient subjects, and finally that no heretic dare show his face." More went even beyond Roper in his commendation; but he proceeded, "And yet, son Roper, I

pray God that some of us, as high as we seem to sit upon the mountains, treading heretics under our feet like ants, live not the day that we would gladly be at league and composition with them, to let them have their churches quietly to themselves, so that they would be contented to let us have ours quietly to ourselves." Roper, somewhat amazed, alleged his reasons for not seeing any cause which could produce such consequences. The zeal of the juvenile Catholic broke out into "a fume;" which More perceiving, with his accustomed and gentle artifice exclaimed merrily, "Well, son Roper, it shall not be so, it shall not be so!"

No one was more sensible than More that to gain over the populace it is necessary to descend to them. But when raillery passed into railing, and sarcasm sunk into scurrility, in these unhappy polemical effusions, our critics have bitterly censured the intolerance and bigotry of Sir Thomas More. All this, however, lies on the surface. The antagonists of More were not less free, nor more refined. More wrote at a cruel crisis: both the subjects he treated on, and the times he wrote in, and the distorted medium through which he viewed the new race as the subverters of government and the eager despoilers of the ecclesiastical lands, were quite sufficient to pervert the intellect of a sage of that day, and throw even the most genial humor into a state of exacerbation.

Our sympathies are no longer to be awakened by the worship of images and relics, prayers to saints, the state of souls in purgatory, and the unwearied blessedness of pilgrimages; nor even by the subtle inquiry, whether the church were before the gospel, or the gospel before the church; or by the burning of Tyndale's Testament, and "the confutation of the new church of Frere Barnes:" all these direful follies, which cost Sir Thomas More many a sleepless night, and bound many a harmless heretic to the stake, have passed away, only, alas! to be succeeded by other

follies as insane, which shall in their turn meet the same fate. Those works of MORE are a voluminous labyrinth; but who ever winds its dark passages shall gather many curious notices of the writer's own age, and many exquisite "merrie tales," delectable to the antiquary, and not to be contemned in the history of the human mind.

The impending Reformation was hastened by a famous invective in the form of "the Supplication of Beggars." Its flagrant argument lay in its arithmetic. It calculated all the possessions of the clergy, who, though but "the four hundredth part of the nation, yet held half of the revenues."

MORE replied to "the Supplication of the Beggars" by "the Supplications of the Souls in Purgatory." These he represented in terror at the sacrilegious annihilation of the masses said for their repose; and this, with the Romanist, was probably no weak argument in that day.

MORE more reasonably ridicules the extravagance of the estimates. Such accounts, got up in haste and designed for a particular purpose, are necessarily inaccurate; but the inaccuracy of a statement does not at all injure the drift of the argument, should that be based on truth.

With MORE "the heretics" were but ordinary rebels, as appears by the style of his narrative. "A rabble of heretics at Abingdon did not intend to lose any more labor by putting up bills (petitions) to Parliament, but to make an open insurrection and subvert all the realm, to kill the clergy, and sell priests' heads as good and cheap as sheep's heads, — three for a penny, buy who would! But God saved the church and the realm. Yet after this was there one John Goose roasted at Tower Hill; and thereupon some other John Goose began to make some gaggling awhile, but it availed him not. And now we have this gosling with his 'Supplication of Beggars.' He maketh his bill in the name of the beggars. The bill is couched as full of *lies* as the beggar swarmeth full of *lice*. We neither will nor shall need to make much business about

this matter: we trust much better in the goodness of good men."

The marriage of the clergy was no doubt at first abused by some. More describes one Richard Mayfield, late a monk and a priest, and, it may be added, a martyr; for he was burned. Of this man he says, "His holy life well declares his heresies, when, being both a priest and a monk, he went about two wives, one in Brabant, another in England. What he meant I cannot make you sure, whether he would be sure of the one if t'other should happen to refuse him; or that he would have them both, the one here, the other there; or else both in one place, the one because he was priest, the other because he was monk."*

Such is the ludicrous ribaldry which runs through the polemical works of Sir Thomas More: the opposite party set no better example, and none worse than the redoubtable Simon Fish, the writer of the "Supplication of Beggars." Oldmixon expresses his astonishment that "the famous Sir Thomas More was so hurried by his zeal, that he forgot he was a gentleman, and treated Mr. Fish with the language of a monk."

Writers who decide on other men and on other times by the spirit of their own try human affairs by a false standard. More was at heart a monk. He wore a prickly hair-shirt to mortify the flesh; he scourged himself with the knotted cord; he practised the penance; and he appeals to miraculous relics as the evidences of his faith! I give his own words in alluding to the Sudarium, — that napkin sent to King Abgarus, on which Jesus impressed the image of his own face: "And it hath been by like miracle in the thin corruptible cloth kept and preserved these 1500 years fresh and well preserved, to the inward comforts, spiritual rejoicing, and great increase of fervor, in the hearts of good Christian people." To this he

* Works, fol. 346.

joins another similar miraculous relic, "the Evangelist Luke's portrait of our blessed Lady, his mother."*

Such were considered as the evidences of the true faith of the Romanists; but MORE with his relics was then dealing in a damaged commodity. Lord Herbert has noticed the great fall of the price of relics at the dissolution of the monasteries: some which had been left in pawn no one cared to redeem.

"The History of King Richard the Third," which first appeared in a correct state in this folio, has given rise to "historic doubts" which led to some paradoxes. The personal monster whom MORE and SHAKSPEARE exhibited has vanished; but the deformity of the revolting parricide was surely revealed in the bones of the infant nephews. This, the earliest history in our vernacular literature, may still be read with delight. As a composition, the critical justice of Lord Orford may be cited: "Its author was then in the vigor of his fancy, and fresh from the study of the Greek and Roman historians, whose manner he has imitated." The details in this history of a prince of the house of York, though they may be tinged with the gall of the Lancastrian Cardinal Morton, descend to us with the weight of contemporary authority. It is supposed that MORE may have derived much of the materials of his history from his early patron: but the charms which still may retain us are the natural yet dramatic dialogue; the picturesque touches; and a style, at times, whose beauty three centuries have not wrinkled; and the emotions which such vital pages leave in the reader's mind.†

The "UTOPIA" of Sir THOMAS MORE, which, being composed in Latin, is not included in this great volume of his

* "Works of Sir Thomas More," 113, col. 2.

† Mr. Singer has furnished us with a correct reprint of this history. More's "Life of Richard the Third" had been given by our chroniclers from copies mutilated or altered. A work whose merits arise from the beauty of its composition admits of neither.

"Workes," may be read by the English reader in its contemporary spirited translation,* and more intelligibly in Bishop Burnet's version. The title of his own coinage has become even proverbial; and, from its classical Latinity, it was better known among foreigners even in Burnet's day than at home. This combination of philosophy, politics, and fiction, though borrowed from the ideal republic of Plato, is worthy of an experienced statesman and a philosopher who at that moment was writing not only above his age, but, as it afterwards appeared, above himself. It has served as the model of that novel class of literature, — political romances. But, though the "Utopia" is altogether imaginary, it displays no graces of the imagination in an ingeniously constructed fable. It is the dream of a good citizen; and, like a dream, the scenes, scattered and unconnected, are broken into by chimerical forms and impracticable achievements. In times of political empiricism, it may be long meditated; and the "Utopia" may yet pass through a million of editions before that new era of the perfectability of the human animal, the millennium of political theorists, which it would seem to have anticipated.

This famous work was written at no immature period of life; for More was then thirty-six years of age. The author had clear notions of the imperfections of governments; but he was not as successful in proposing remedies for the disorders he had detected. A community where all the property belongs to the government, and to which every man contributes by his labor, that he may have his own wants supplied; a domestic society which very much resembles a great public school, and converts a citizen, through all the gradations of

* The old translation, "by Raphe Robinson, 1551," has been republished by Dr. Dibdin, accompanied by copious annotations. Almost every thing relating to the family, the life, and the works of the author, may be found in "the biographical and literary introduction." It is the first specimen of an edition where the diligence of the editor has not been wasted on trivial researches or nugatory commentaries

his existence, from form to form; and where every man, like an automatical machine, must be fixed in his proper place, — supposes a society of passionless beings which social life has never shown, and surely never can. The art of carrying on war without combating, by the wiliness of stratagems; or procuring a peace by offering a reward for the assassination of the leaders of the enemy, with whom, rather than with the people, all wars originate; the injunction, to the incurable, of suicide; the paucity of laws which enabled every man to plead his own cause; the utmost freedom granted to religious sects, where every man who contested the religion of another was sent into exile, or condemned to bondage; the contempt of the precious metal, which was here used but as toys for children, or as fetters for slaves, — such fanciful notions, running counter to the experience of history or to the advantages of civilized society, induced some to suspect the whole to be but the incoherent dreams of an idling philosopher, thrown down at random without much consideration. It is sobriety indulging an inebriation, and good sense wandering in a delirium. Burnet, in his translation, cautiously reminds his readers, that he must in no wise be made responsible for the matter of the work which "he ventured" to translate. Others have conceived the "Utopia" dangerous for those speculators in politics who might imagine the author to have been serious. More himself has adjudged the book "no better worthy than to lye always in his own island, or else to be consecrated to Vulcan."

But assuredly many of the extraordinary principles inculcated in the "Utopia" were not so lightly held by its illustrious author. The sincerity of his notions may be traced in his own simple habits, his opinions in conversation, and the tenor of his invariable life. His contempt of outward forms and personal honors, his voluntary poverty, his fearlessness of death, — all these afford ample evidence that the singularity of the man himself was as remarkable as the work he pro-

duced. The virtues he had expatiated on he had contemplated in his own breast.

This singular but great man was a sage whose wisdom lay concealed in his pleasantry; a politician without ambition; a lord-chancellor who entered into office poor, and left it not richer. When his house was to be searched for treasure, — which circumstance had alarmed his friends, — well did that smile become him when he observed, that "it would be only a sport to his family;" and he pleasantly added, "lest they should find out my wife's gay girdle and her gold beads." When the clergy, in convention, had voted a donation amounting to no inconsiderable fortune, "not for services to be performed, but for those which he had chosen to do," More rejected the gift with this noble confession: "I am both over-proud, and over-slothful also, to be hired for money to take half the labor and business in writing that I have taken since I began." And when accused by Tyndale and others for being "the proctor of the clergy," and richly fed, how forcible was his expression! — "He had written his controversial works only that God might give him thanks."

It happened, however, that his after-conduct in life, in regard to that religious toleration which he had wisely maintained in his ideal society, was as opposite as night to noon. Could he, then, have ever been earnest in his "Utopia"? — he who exults over the burning of a heretic; who "could not agree, that, before the day of doom, there were either any saint in heaven, or soul in purgatory, or in hell either;" for which horrible heresy he was delivered at last into the secular hands, and "burned as there was never wretch I ween better worth."* This harmless and hapless metaphysical theologian did not disagree with More on the existence of saints, of souls, nor of hell. The heretic conceived — and could he change by volition the ideas which seemed to him just? —

* "Sir Thomas More's Workes," 348

that no reward or punishment could be inflicted before the final judgment. A conversation of five minutes might have settled the difference; for they only varied about the precise time!

In that great revolution which was just opening in his latter days, MORE seems sometimes to have mistaken theology for politics. A strange and mysterious change, such as the history of man can hardly parallel, occurred in the mind of MORE, by what insensible gradations is a secret which must lie in his grave.

This great man laid his head on the block to seal his conscience with his blood. Protestants have lamented this act as his weakness: the Romanists decreed a martyrdom. In a sudden change of system in the affairs of a nation, when even justice may assume the appearance of violence, the most enlightened minds, standing amidst their ancient opinions and their cherished prejudices subverted, display how the principle of integrity predominates over that of self-preservation.

THE EARL OF SURREY AND SIR THOMAS WYATT.

Not many years intervened between the uncouth gorgeousness of Hawes, the homely sense of Barclay, the anomalous genius of Skelton, and the pure poetry of Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey. In the poems of Surrey, and his friend, Sir Thomas Wyatt,* the elder, the age of taste, if not of genius, opens on us. Dryden and Pope sometimes seem to appear two centuries before their date. There is no chronology in the productions of real genius; for, whenever a great master appears, he advances his art to a period which labor, without creation, toils for centuries to reach.

The great reformer of our poetry, he who first from his own mind, without a model, displayed its permanent principles, was the poetic Earl of Surrey. There was inspiration in his system, and he freed his genius from the barbaric taste or the undisturbed dulness which had prevailed since the days of Chaucer. His ear was musical; and he formed a metrical structure with the melodies of our varied versification, rejecting the rude rhythmical rhyme which had hitherto prevailed in our poetry. He created a poetic diction, and graceful involutions: a finer selection of words, and a delicacy of expression, were now substituted for vague diffusion and homeliness of phrases and feeble rhymes; or, on the other hand, for

* "The Works of the Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt," by Dr. Nott, form an important accession to our national literature. If we cannot always agree with the conclusions of our literary antiquary, we must value the variety of his researches, not less profound than extensive.

that vitiated style of crude pedantic Latinisms, such as "pur púre, aureáte, pulchritúde, celatúre, facúnde," and so many others laborious nothings, filling the verse with noise. The contemplative and tender SURREY charms by opening some picturesque scene, or dwelling on some impressive incident. He had discerned the error of those inartificial writers, whose minute puerility, in their sterile abundance, detailed till nothing was remembered, and described till nothing was perceptible. Hitherto our poets had narrowed their powers by moulding their conceptions by temporary tastes, the manners and modes of thinking of their day; but their remoteness, which may delight the antiquary, diminishes their interest with the poetical reader. SURREY struck into that secret path which leads to general nature, guided by his art: his tenderness and his thoughtful musings find an echo in our bosoms, and are as fresh with us as they were in the court of Windsor three centuries past.

These rare qualities in a poet at such a period would of themselves form an era in our literature; but SURREY also extended their limits. The disciple of Chaucer was also the pupil of Petrarch; and the Earl of SURREY composed the *first sonnets* in the English language, with the amatory tenderness and the condensed style of its legitimate structure. Dr. Nott further claims the honor for Surrey of the invention of heroic blank verse; Surrey's version of Virgil being unrhymed.

When Warton suggested that Surrey borrowed the idea of blank verse from Trissino's "Italia Liberata," he seems to have been misled by the inaccurate date of 1528, which he affixed to the publication of that epic. Trissino's epic did not appear till 1547,* and Surrey perished in the January of that year. It was indeed long a common opinion, that Trissino invented the *versi sciolti*, or blank verse; though Quadrio

* "Tiraboschi," vol. vii. — Haym's "Bibliotheca Italiani." When Conybeare communicated the same information to Dr. Bliss, it must have been derived from Warton.

confesses that such had been used by preceding poets, whose names he has recorded. The mellifluence and flexibility of the vowelly language were favorable to unrhymed verse; while the poverty of the poetic diction, and the unmusical verse of France, could never venture to show itself without the glitter of rhyme. The heroic blank verse, however, was an afterthought of Surrey: he first composed his unrhymed verse in the long Alexandrine, had afterwards felicitously changed it for the decasyllabic verse, but did not live to correct the whole of his version. Surrey could not, therefore, have designed the pauses and the cadences of blank verse in his first choice, nor will they be found in his last. Nor can it be conceded that blank verse was wholly unknown among us. Webbe, a critic long after, in the reign of Elizabeth, considers the author of "Pierce Ploughman" as "the first whom he had met with who observed the quantity of our verse, *without the curiosity of rhyme.*"

Dr. Nott, with editorial ardor, considers that the unfinished model of Surrey was the prototype of all subsequent blank verse, and was also the origin of its introduction into dramatic composition. A sweeping conclusion, when we consider the artificial structure of our blank verse from the days of Milton, who, not without truth, asserted that "he first gave the example of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming." This indeed has been denied to Milton by those who look to dates, and have no ear; and are apt to imagine that rhymeless lines, mere couplets, with ten well-counted syllables in each, must necessarily form blank verse. Dr. Nott, in quoting the eulogy of Ascham on this noble effort of Surrey "to bring our national poetry to perfection," has omitted to add what followed; namely, the censure of Surrey for not having rejected our heroic verse altogether, and substituted the hexameter of Virgil in English verse. It is therefore quite evident that Ascham had formed no conception of blank verse, no more

than had Surrey, such as it was to be formed by the ear of Milton and by some of his successors. All beginnings are obscure: something is borrowed from the past, and something is invented for the future, till it is vain to fix the gradations of invention which terminate in what at length becomes universally adopted.

Could the life, or what we have of late called the psychological history, of this poetic Earl of Surrey be now written, it would assuredly open a vivid display of fine genius, high passions, and romantic enthusiasm. Little is known, save a few public events; but the print of the footsteps shows their dimension. We trace the excellence, while we know but little of the person.

The youth of Surrey, and his life, hardly passed beyond that period, betrayed the buoyancy of a spirit vehement and quick, but rarely under guidance. Reckless truth, in all its openness and its sternness, was his habit, and glory was his passion; but in this restlessness of generous feelings his anger too easily blazed forth. He was haughty among his peers, and he did not even scorn to chastise an inferior. We are not surprised at discovering that one of so unreserved a temper should in that jealous reign more than once have suffered confinement. But the youthful hero who pursued to justice a relative and a court favorite for a blow, by which that relative had outraged Surrey's faithful companion; he who would eat flesh in Lent; he who issued one night to break the windows of the citizens, to remind them that they were a sinful race, however that might have been instigated by zeal for "the new religion," — all such things betrayed his enthusiastic daring: but his deeds, to become splendid, depended on their direction. The lofty notions he attached to his descent; his proud shield quartering the arms of the Confessor, which the duke, his father, dared not show to a jealous monarch; his feats of arms at the barriers, and his military conduct in his campaigns, —

"Who saw Kelsal blaze,
Landrecy burnt, and battered Boulogne render;
At Montreuil's gate hopeless of a recure" (recovery),—

there, where that twin-spirit, his beloved associate, Clere, to save his wounded friend, had freely yielded his own life; his magnificence as a courtier, the companion of the princely Richmond; all "the joy and feast with a king's son;" his own record of the brilliant days and the soothing fancies of "proud Windsor;" "its large open courts;" "the gravelled ground for the foaming horse;" "the palm-play;" "the stately seats and dances;" "the secret groves;" and "the wild forest; with cry of hounds;" and, more than all, the mysterious passion for "the fair Geraldine,"—cover the misty shade of Surrey with a cloud of glory, which, while it veils the man from our sight, seems to enlarge the object we gaze on.

We see this youth, he who first taught the English Muse accents she had never before tried, hurried from his literary seclusion, to be immolated on the scaffold, by the arts of a remorseless rival,—of him whose pride at last sent him to the block, and who signed the death-warrant of his own brother! It was at a moment when the dying monarch, as the breath was fleeting from his lips, once in his life was voiceless to condemn a state victim, that Somerset took up the stamp which Henry used, to affix it to the death-warrant of SURREY Victim of his own domestic circle! The father disunited with the son, from fear or jealousy; the mother separated from the father, to the last vowing unforgiving vengeance; a sister disnatured of all kin, hastening to be the voluntary accuser of her father and her brother! These domestic hatreds were the evil spirits which raged in the house of the Howards, and hurried on the fate of the accomplished, the poetic, the hapless Earl of Surrey.

A tale of such grandeur and such woe passed away unheeded even by a slight record, so inexpert were the few

writers of those days, and probably so perilous was their curiosity. The pretended trial of Surrey, who, being no lord of Parliament, was tried by a timorous jury at Guildhall, seems to have been studiously suppressed; and the last solemn act of his life, "the leaving it," is alike concealed. Even in the registers of public events by our chroniclers, they unanimously pass over the glorious name and the miserable death, to spare the monarch's or the victim's honor.

The poems of SURREY were often read, as their multiplied editions show; but of the noble poet, and his Geraldine, tradition had not sent down even an imperfect tale. In this uncertainty, the world was disposed to listen to any romantic story of such genius and love and chivalry.

The secret history of SURREY was at length revealed, and the gravity of its discloser vouched for its authenticity Who would doubt the testimony of plain Anthony à Wood?

SURREY is represented hastening on a chivalric expedition to Italy: at Florence he challenges the universe, that his Geraldine was the peerless of the beautiful. In his travels, Cornelius Agrippa exhibited to Surrey, in a magical mirror, his fair mistress as she was occupied at the moment of inspection. He beheld her sick, weeping in bed, reading his poems, in all the grief of absence. This incident set spurs to his horse. At Florence he hastened to view the chamber which had witnessed the birth of so much beauty. At the court he affixed his challenge, and maintained this emprise in tilt and tourney. The Duke of Florence, flattered that a Florentine lady should be renowned by the prowess of an English nobleman, invited Surrey to a residence at his court; but our Amadis more nobly purposed to hold on his career through all the courts of Italy, shivering the lances of whoever would enter the lists, whether "Christian, Jew, or Saracen." Suddenly the Quixotism ends, by this paragon of chivalry being recalled home by the royal command.

This Italian adventure seemed congenial with the romantic

mystery in which the poet had involved the progress of his passion for his poetic mistress. He had himself let us into some secrets. Geraldine came from "Tuscany," — Florence was her ancient seat; her sire was an earl, her dame of "princes' blood;" "yet she was fostered by milk of an Irish breast;" and, from her tender years in Britain, "she tasted costly food with a king's child." The amatorial poet even designates the spots hallowed by his passion: he first saw her at Hunsdon, Windsor chased him from her sight, and at Hampton Court "first wished her for mine!"

These hints and these localities were sufficient to irritate the vague curiosity of Surrey's readers, and more particularly of our critical researchers, of whom Horace Walpole first ventured to explain the inexplicable. With singular good fortune, and from slight grounds, Walpole conjectured that Geraldine was no Italian dame, but Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, one of the daughters of the Earl of Kildare: the family were often called the Geraldines. The Italian descent from the Geraldi was made out by a spurious genealogy. The challenge and the tournament no one doubted. But some harder knots were to be untied; and our theoretical historian, unfurnished by facts and dates, it has been recently shown, discovered some things which never existed.

But every writer followed in the track. Warton compliments the sagacity of Walpole, and embroiders the narrative. The historian of our poetry not only details the incident of the magical mirror, but adds that "the imagination of Surrey was *heated anew* by this *interesting spectacle!*" He therefore had no doubt of the reality; and indeed, to confirm the whole adventure of the romantic chivalry, he refers the curious to a finely sculptured shield which is still preserved by the dukes of Norfolk. The Italian adventures of Surrey, and all that Walpole had erroneously suggested, are fully accepted; and our critic observes, "Surrey's life throws so much light on the character and the subjects of his poetry, that it is almost

impossible to consider the one without exhibiting the *few anecdotes* of the other." But the critical sagacity of Warton did not wholly desert him through all the circumstantial narrative; for suddenly his pen pauses, and he exclaims on these travels of Surrey, that "they have the air of a romance!"

And it was a romance; and it served for history many a year!* This tale of literary delusion may teach all future investigators into obscure points of history to probe them by dates.

It was long after the days of Walpole and Warton, and even of George Ellis, that it was discovered that these travels into Italy by Surrey had been transferred literally from an "Historical Romance." A great wit in Elizabeth's reign, Tom Nash, sent forth in "the Life of Jack Wilton, an unfortunate traveller," this whole legend of Surrey. The entire fiction of Nash annihilates itself by its extraordinary anachronisms.

In what respect Nash designed to palm the imposture of his "Historical Romance" on the world, may be left to be explained by some "Jack Wiltons" of our own. He says, "All that in this *phantastical treatise* I can promise is some *reasonable conveyance of history*, and variety of mirth." Must we trust to their conscience for "the reasonable conveyance"?

We now trace the whole progress of this literary delusion.

On Surrey's ideal passion, and on this passage misconceived, —

> "From Tuscan came my lady's worthy race;
> Fair Florence was sometime her ancient seat," —

the romancer inferred that Geraldine must be a fair Floren-

* And, strange to add, it is still history! Mr. Godwin, in "the Lives of Necromancers," details every part of this apocryphal tale! and the Edinburgh reviewer very philosophically, not doubtful of its verity, accounts for all its supernatural magic, and clearly explains the inexplicable!

tine: Surrey had alluded to the fanciful genealogy of the Geralds from the Geraldi. On this single hint, the romancer sends him on his aerial journey in this business of love and chivalry.

This romance, of which it is said only three copies are known, was published in 1594. Four years after, DRAYTON, looking about for subjects for his Ovidian Epistles, eagerly seized on a legend so favorable for poetry, and Geraldine and Surrey supplied two amatory epistles. Anthony à Wood, finding himself without materials to frame a life of the poetic Surrey, had recourse to "the famous poet," as he calls Drayton, whom he could quote; for Drayton was a consecrated bard for the antiquary, since Selden had commented on his great topographical poem. But honest Anthony on this occasion was not honest enough. He did not tell the world that he had fallen on the romance itself, Drayton's sole authority. Literally and silently our antiquary transcribed the fuller passages from a volume he was ashamed to notice, disingenuously dropping certain incidents which would not have honored the memory of Surrey. Thus the "phantastical" history for ever blots the authentic tomes of the grave *Athenæ Oxonienses*. A single moment of scrutiny would have detected the whole fabricated narrative; but there is a charm in romance which bewitched our luckless Anthony.

Thus it happened that the romancer, on a misconception, constructs an imaginary fabric; the poet Drayton builds on the romancer, the sober antiquary on both; then the commentators stand upon the antiquary. Never was a house of cards of so many stories. The foundation, Surrey's poetic passion, may be as fictitious as the rest; for the visionary Geraldine, viewed in Agrippa's magic mirror, was hardly a more mysterious shadow.

Not one of these writers was informed of what recent researches have demonstrated. They knew not that this Earl of Surrey in boyhood was betrothed to his lady, also a

child, — one of the customs to preserve wealth or power in great families of that day. These historians were unfurnished with any dates to guide them, and never suspected, that, when Surrey is made to set off on his travels in Italy after a Donna Giraldi who had no existence, he was the father of two sons, and "the fair Geraldine" was only *seven* years of age! that Surrey's first love broke out when she was *nine;* that he declared his passion when she was about *thirteen;* and, finally, that Geraldine, having attained to the womanly discretion of *fifteen*, dismissed the accomplished Earl of Surrey, with whom she never could be united, to accept the hand of old Sir Anthony Brown, aged sixty. Lady Brown disturbs the illusion of Geraldine in the modest triumph of sixteen over sixty.

Dr. Nott is in trepidation for the domestic morality of the noble poet; yet some of these amatory sonnets may have been addressed to his betrothed. He has perplexed himself by a formal protest against the perils of Platonic love, but apologizes for his hero in the manners of the age. It appears that not only the mistress of Petrarch, but those of Bayard the chevalier "sans reproche," and Sir Philip Sidney, were married women, with as crystalline reputations as their lovers. Nor should we omit the great friend of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyatt, who was a staid married man, notwithstanding his romantic passion for Anne Bullen. The courtly imitators of Petrarch had made love fashionable. It is evident that Surrey found nothing so absorbing in his passion, whatever it might be; for, whenever called into public employment, he ceased to be Petrarch, which Petrarch never could, and possibly for a want of occupation. A small quantity of passion, dexterously meted out, may be ample to inspire an amatorial poet. Neither Surrey nor Petrarch, accomplished lovers and poets, with all their mistress' coquetry and cruelty, broke their hearts in the tenderness of their ideas, or were consumed by "the perpetual fires" of their imagination.

We have now traced the literary delusion which long veiled the personal history of the Earl of Surrey, and which has duped so many ingenious commentators. The tale affords an additional evidence of that "confusion worse confounded" by truth and fiction, where the names are real, and the incidents fictitious; a fatality which must always accompany "Historical Romances." The same mischance occurred to "the Cavalier" of De Foe, often published under different titles, suitable to the designs of the editors, and which tale has been repeatedly mistaken for an authentic history written at the time. Under the assumed designation by "a Shropshire Gentleman," whole passages have been transferred from the romance into the authentic history of Nichols's Leicestershire, just as Anthony à Wood had felicitously succeeded in his historical authority of Tom Nash's "Life of Jack Wilton."

In the story of Surrey and Wyatt, one circumstance is too precious to be passed over. Wyatt commenced as a writer nearly ten years before Surrey, and his earlier poetic compositions are formed in the old rhythmical school. His manuscripts, which still exist, bear his own strong marks in every line to regulate their cæsura; for our ancient poets, to satisfy the ear, were forced to depend on such artificial contrivances. It was in the strict intercourse of their literary friendship that the elder bard surrendered up the ancient barbarism, and, by the revelation of his younger friend, studied an art which he had not himself discovered. Wyatt is an abundant writer; but he has wrought his later versification with great variety, though he has not always smoothed his workmanship with his nail. For many years, Wyatt had smothered his native talent by translation from Spanish and Italian poets, and in his rusty rhythmical measures. He lived to feel the truth of nature, and to practise happier art. Of his amatory poems, many are graceful, most ingenious. The immortal one to his "Lute," the usual musical instrument of the lover or the poet, as the guitar in Spain, com

posed with as much happiness as care, is the universal theme of every critic of English poetry.

His defrauded or romantic passion for Anne Bullen often lends to his effusions a deep mysterious interest, when we recollect that the poet alludes to a rival, who must have made him tremble as he wrote.

"Who list to hunt? I know where is an hind!
But as for me, alas! I may no more,
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore:
I am of them that furthest come behind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
As well as I may spend his time in vain:
Graven with diamonds, in letters plain,
There is written, her fair neck round about,—
"Noli me tangere; for Cæsar's I am,
And wild to hold, though I seem tame."

We perceive Wyatt's keen perception of character in the last verse, admirably expressive of the playfulness and levity of the thoughtless but susceptible Anne Bullen, which never left her when in the Tower or on the scaffold. The poems of WYATT accompanied the unhappy queen in her imprisonment; and it was Wyatt's sister who received her prayer-book with her last smile, for the block before her could not disturb the tenderness of her affections.

WYATT is an ethical poet, more pregnant with reflection than imagination: he was intimately conversant with the world; and it is to be regretted that our poet has only left three satires, the first Horatian Epistles we possess. These are replete with the urbanity and delicate irony of the Roman, but, what was then still unexampled, flowing with the fulness and freedom of the versification of Dryden. Wyatt had much salt, but no gall.

WYATT excelled SURREY in his practical knowledge of mankind: he had been a sojourner in politic Madrid, and had been employed on active embassies. Surrey could only give the history of his own emotions, affections, and habits: he is

the more interesting poet for us; but we admire a great man in Wyatt, one whose perception was not less subtile and acute because it spread on a far wider surface of life.

Wiat, for so he wrote his name, was a great wit; as, according to the taste of his day, his anagram fully maintained. We are told that he was a nice observer of times, persons, and circumstances; knowing when to speak, and, we may add, how to speak. That happened to Wyatt which can be recorded probably of no other wit: three prompt strokes of pleasantry thrown out by him produced three great revolutions, — the fall of Wolsey, the seizure of the monastic lands, and the emancipation of England from the papal supremacy. The Wyatts, besides their connection with Anne Bullen, had all along been hostile to the great cardinal. One day, Wyatt, entering the king's closet, found his majesty much disturbed, and displeased with the minister. Ever quick to his purpose, Wyatt, who always told a story well, now, to put his majesty into good humor, and to keep the cardinal down in as bad a one, furnished a ludicrous tale of "the curs baiting a butcher's dog." The application was obvious to the butcher's son of Ipswich; and we are told, for the subject but not the tale itself has been indicated, that the whole plan of getting rid of a falling minister was laid down by this address of the wit. It was with the same dexterity, when Wyatt found the king in a passion on the delay of his divorce, that with a statesmanlike sympathy, appealing to the presumed tendency of the royal conscience, he exclaimed, "Lord! that a man cannot repent him of his sin but by the pope's leave!" The hint was dropped: the egg of the Reformation was laid, and soon it was hatched! When Henry the Eighth paused at the blow levelled at the whole ponderous machinery of the papal clergy, dreading from such wealth and power a revolution, besides the ungraciousness of the intolerable transfer of all abbey lands to the royal domains, Wyatt had his repartee for his counsel: "Butter the rooks' nests!" — that is,

divide all these houses and lands with the nobility and gentry.

Wyatt should have been the minister of Henry: we should then have learned if a great wit, where wit was ever relished, could have saved himself under a monarch who dashed down a Wolsey.

Surrey and Wyatt, though often engaged, the one as a statesman, the other as a general, found their most delightful avocation in the intercourse of their studies. Their minds seemed cast in the same mould. They mutually confided their last compositions, and sometimes chose the same subject in the amicable wrestlings of their genius. It was a community of studies and a community of skill: the thoughts of the one flowed into the thoughts of the other, and we frequently discover the verse from one in the poem of the other. Wyatt was the more fortunate man; for he did not live to see himself die in the partner of his fame perishing on a scaffold, and he has received a poet's immortality from that friend's noble epitaph. In his epitaph, Surrey dwells on every part of the person of his late companion, — he expatiates on the excellences of the head, the face, the hand, the tongue, the eye, and the heart: but these are not fanciful conceits; the solemnity of his thoughts and his deep emotions tell their truth. Wyatt's was —

> "A head where Wisdom's mysteries did frame;
> Whose hammers beat still in that lively brain,
> As on a stithy,* where some work of fame
> Was daily wrought."

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* The smith's forge.

THE SPOLIATION OF THE MONASTERIES.

INCIDENTS of such an overwhelming nature in political history as are those of the Reformation can have no sudden origin. They are but the consequences of something which has preceded. In our country, the suppression of the monasteries and the abbeys had been long prepared: it was not, and it could not have been, the temporary passions nor the absolute will of an arbitrary monarch, which by a word could have annihilated an awful power, had not the royal edict been but the echo of many voices. It was attacking but an aged power dissolving in its own corruption, which, blind with pride, looked with complacency on its own unnatural greatness, its political anasarca. Its opulence was an object it could not conceal from its enviers, and its paramount eminence was too heavy a yoke for its rising rivals. This power, in the language of the times, had "covered the land with an Egyptian darkness;" and when appeared the "godly and learned king," as the eighth Henry was called, he was saluted as "a Moses who delivered them from the bondage of Pharaoh." It is not therefore strange that the act which at a single blow annihilated the monastic orders and their "lands and tenements" was hailed as the most patriotic which had been ever passed by an English sovereign. It made even a tyrannous and jealous monarch, who cut off more heads of men and women than any other on record, popular and extolled even in his latter days.

Henry the Eighth had paused at the blow he was about to level. The plunder was too monstrous even for the hand of

an arbitrary monarch. Its division among the nobility and gentry was an expedient which removed the odium from royalty, and invested it with that munificence which dazzled the pride of Henry. In the vast harvest, the king refused the lion's share; looking for his safer portion in the secure loyalty of the new possessors to whom he transferred this vast and novel wealth.

As the scheme was managed, therefore, it was a compromise or copartnership of the king and his courtiers. The lands now lie the open prey of the hardy claimant or the sly intriguer: crowds of suppliants wearied the crown to participate in that national spoliation. Every one hastened to urge some former service or some present necessity as a colorable plea for obtaining a grant of some of the suppressed lands. A strange custom was then introduced, — that of "begging for an estate." Kneeling to the king, and specifying some particular lands, was found a convenient method to acquire them; and these royal favors were sometimes capriciously and even ludicrously bestowed. Fuller has a pleasant tale concerning one Master Champernoun. One day, observing two or three gentlemen waiting at a door through which the king was to pass, he was inquisitive to learn their suit; which they refused to tell. On the king's appearance, they threw themselves on their knees; and Champernoun was prompt in joining them, with an implicit faith, says Fuller, that courtiers never ask any thing hurtful to themselves. They were begging for an estate. The king granted their petition. On this, Champernoun claimed his share of the largesse: they remonstrated that he had never come to beg with them. He appealed to the king; and his brother-beggars were fain to allot him the considerable Priory of St. Germains, which he sold to the ancestor of the present possessor, the Earl of St. Germains.

The king was prodigal in his grants; for, the more he multiplied the receivers of his bounties, the more numerous

would be the stanch defenders of their new possessions:* gratitude was the least of their merits. He counted on their resolution and their courage. The bait was relishing; and there were some, when land-grants became more scarce, whose voracity of reformation attempted to snatch at the lands of the universities, which had certainly gone had not Henry's love of literature protected their trembling colleges. We have his majesty's own words, in replying to the suggestion of some hungry courtier: "Ha! sirrah! I perceive the abbey-lands have fleshed you, and set your teeth on edge, to ask also those colleges. We pulled down sin by defacing the monasteries; but you desire to throw down all goodness by subversion of colleges. I tell you, sir, that I judge no land in England better bestowed than on our universities, which shall maintain our realm when we be dead and rotten. Follow no more this vein, but content yourselves with what you have already, or else seek honest means whereby to increase your worldhoods."

Lord Cromwell was the chief minister through whose mediation these novel royal grants of houses and lands were distributed. There was evidently no chance of attention from his lordship without the most open and explicit offers of the grossest bribery. The Chancellor Audley, in bargaining with Lord Cromwell for the Abbey of St. Osyth, for "some present trouble in this suit," one day sent twenty pounds, with "my poor hearty good-will, during my life." Perhaps the bribe, though only placed to account, had not its full weight,

* A fear of the restitution of these abbey-lands to their former uses appears to have prevailed long after their alienation. So late as in the reign of James the First, the founder of Dulwich College, in a dispute respecting the land, observes hypothetically, "If the State should be at any time pleased to returne all abbey-lands to their former use, I must lose Dulwich, for which I have paid now £5,000." At a later revolution, when the bishops' lands were seized on by the parliamentarians, many obtained those lands at easy rates, or at no rate at all: the greater part reverted; but, if I am not misinformed, there are still descendants of some of these parliamentarians who hold estates without title-deeds.

as the chancellor does not appear, in the present instance, to have possessed himself of this abbey, though afterwards, with the spoils of two rich monasteries, he built the most magnificent mansion in England, by which he perpetuated his own name in the once-famed Audley End. Sir Thomas Elyot, in soliciting his lordship's mediation with the king to reward him with "some convenient portion of the suppressed lands," found it advisable to offer a conditional promise. "Whatsoever portion of land that I shall attain by the king's grace, I promise to give to your lordship the first year's fruits, with my assured and faithful heart and service." All were offering their hearts and the rest of their lives to Lord Cromwell.

As for the regal dispenser himself, so stupendous was his portion, that it became necessary to found a court never heard of before, — "the Court of Augmentation;" an expressive designation, indicating its plenary character, with its chancellor and its treasurer, and a long routine of officers, and none too many, "that the king might be justly dealt with," says Cowell, "the interpreter," "for all the manors and parks, the colleges and chantries, and the religious houses which the king did not sell or give away;" that is, the selected prey which the royal eagle grasped in his own talons.

We are accustomed to trace the Reformation to Henry the Eighth: but, in verity, small are the claims of this sovereign on posterity; for, through all the multiplied ramifications of superstition, nothing under him was reformed. The other great event of the Reformation — the assumption of the spiritual supremacy — accorded with the national independence from a foreign jurisdiction. The policy was English; but it originated in the private passions of the monarch. Assuredly had the tiara deigned to nod to the regal solicitor, then ha "the Defender of the Faith" only given to the world another edition of his book against Luther.

In the last years of his reign, Henry vacillated in his uncertain reform. Sometimes leaning on one party, and

sometimes on another, he had lost the vigor of his better days. In his last parliament, though not without some difficulty, both from Protestant and Papist, they had voted for "the augmentation" of the royal revenue, their grant of the chantries. These chantries were the last wrecks of the monastic lands. A single church had often several chantries attached to it. Chantries were endowments of estates by the sinners of that age for the benefit of having eternal masses sung for their departed souls. Henry on this occasion, in his last speech, strongly animadverts on the national disunion; and among his thanks mingles his menaces "to unite them in a more unacceptable way" than the tenderness with which at that moment he addressed them, for their concessions to his "Court of Augmentation."

It is also evident, by this able and extraordinary speech, that Henry would gladly have revoked his gift to the people of "the Word of God in their mother-tongue," as his majesty expresses himself.* He had, indeed, already in part withdrawn the freedom he had granted by restricting it to a few persons, and only to be used on particular occasions. His majesty proceeds: "You lay too much stress on your own expositions and fantastical opinions. In such sublime matters you may easily mistake. This permission of reading the Bible is only designed for private information, not to furnish you with reprimanding phrases and expressions of reproach against priests and preachers. I am extremely sorry to find with how little reverence the Word of God is mentioned; how people squabble about the sense; how it is turned into wretched rhyme, sung and jingled in every ale-house and tavern." This part of the king's speech was pointed at the general readers of the Scriptures; but his majesty did not discover any happier union among the clergy themselves, whom he roundly rates: "I am every day informed that

* See an abstract from one of his proclamations in "Curiosities of Literature," vol. iv. p. 286. — Ed.

you of the clergy are declaiming against each other in the pulpit; and here your charity and discretion are quite lost in vehemence and satire. Some are too stiff in their old *mumpsimus*, and others too busy and curious in their new *sumpsimus*.* Thus the pulpits are, as it were, batteries against each other: the noise is hostile and ruinous. How can we expect the poor people should live friendly with their neighbors, when they have such unhappy precedents of discord and dissension in those that teach them?"

Henry the Eighth rejected the pope; but surely he died a Romanist. His unwieldy huge form was lifted up from his death-bed that he might prostrate himself, and in the writer's language, who, however, was a Papist, "bury himself in the earth," to testify his reverence for "the real presence," when it was brought before him. His will, which, though it was put aside, was not the less the king's will, attested his last supplications to "the Virgin Mary, and all her holy company of heaven;" and he endowed an altar at Windsor, "to be honorably kept up with all things necessary for *a daily mass*, there to be read *perpetually while the world shall endure*." At the same time, Henry endowed the poor knights of Windsor, upon condition that they should repeat their eternal masses for his soul. His magnificence was proportionate to his sins; but his perpetual masses and the world did not endure together.

With this fact before us, it is not therefore strange that foreign historians should have declared that our Henry the Eighth never designed a Reformation; that he altered nothing; and had only raised a schism, which those who contest the papal sovereignty in their civil affairs, as the Gallican Church affected to do, would incline more to approve than to censure.

* This alludes to the well-known story of the old priest, who, having blunderingly used *mumpsimus* for *sumpsimus*, would never be put right, alleging that "he hated all novelties."

This monarch has been lauded as a patriot king for the suppression of the monasteries and the national emancipation from the tiara; but patriotism has often covered the most egotistical motives.

A CRISIS AND A RE-ACTION.

ROBERT CROWLEY.

THERE is a state of transition in society, which we usually call a crisis. A crisis is the most active moment of conflicting principles: the novel must extirpate the ancient, the ancient must eject the novel; the one looks to be continued, and the other to be settled. It is a painful state of obstinate resistance, like that of two wrestlers when neither can cast down the other.

Fortunate are the people who have only to pass through a single crisis. But, in the wrath of Providence, there may be reserved another connecting crisis in the chain of human events; and this we term a re-action, usually accompanied by a retaliation: then comes the hoarded vengeance and the day of retribution on which issues no amnesty. In physics, action and re-action are equal; the reciprocation of any impulse not being greater than the impulse itself. Nature in her operations thus preserves an equilibrium; but the human hatreds and the partial interests which man has contrived for his own misery can only find that equilibrium when he submits to a toleration. But a toleration is a partition of power, and predominance is the vitality of a party. The Catholic vengeance of Mary in its re-action was out of all proportion greater than the Protestant docility of Edward. Our nation has been more subject to this crisis and this re-action than perhaps any other. The reign of Charles the First was a crisis, that of Charles the Second a re-action; that of James the Second brought on a crisis, and the revolution of 1688

was the consequential re-action. But never have the people suffered more than during the three reigns of Edward the Sixth, Mary, and Elizabeth: a terrible intolerance disorganized the whole community, — the conflict of old and of new creeds, of reciprocal persecutions and alternate triumphs, of abjurations and recantations, of supple compliers and rabid polemics, and of pugilistic contests of the ejected with the the ejectors, — rapid scenes at once tragic and ludicrous.

Henry the Eighth died in 1547, and the accession of Elizabeth was in 1558. In this short period of eleven years we were governed by two sovereigns, whose reigns, happily for the English people, were the shortest in our annals.

A new era was opening under the dominion of Henry; for he was a monarch of enlarged views. But the intellectual character of England in its vernacular literature was retarded by the events which occurred in the reigns of the two successors of this sovereign. The nation indeed suffered no longer from the civil wars of the rival Roses; but another war now shook the empire with as merciless a rivalry: it was a universal conflict of opinions and dogmas. The governing powers themselves combated each other; and whether in opposing the Reformer to the Romanist, or in restoring "the papelin" to root out "the gospeller," in these two mutable reigns they neutralized or distracted the unhappy people; and, while both maintained that they were proffering "the true religion," religion itself seemed to have lost its eternal truth. Edward with an infirm hand established, what, from her short reign, Mary, with her barbarous energy, could only imperfectly cast down.

Edward the Sixth, a boy-king and a puppet-prince, invested with supreme power, acted without any volition of his own. We are prepossessed in his favor by his laborious diary. It is, however, remarkable that no solitary entry made in that book of life, no chance effusion, disturbs the uninterrupted equanimity. Whether the young king signs

for the decapitation of his two uncles, or jots down the burning of Joan of Kent, an Arian, and another of a Dutchman, a Socinian, or records how a live goose suspended had its head sliced off by those who run at the ring, they seem equally to be matters of course, and by him were only distinguished by their respective dates. A nation's hope has always been the flattering painter of every youthful prince who dies immaturely: in the royal youth is lamented the irreparable loss of the future great monarch. But his father had been the most glorious youthful prince who ever adorned a throne; and it would be hard to decide, by the heartless chronicle of Edward, whether such an imperturbable spirit would have closed his life as a Nero or a Titus. This unhappy young prince must have felt the utter misery of his condition; for his was that curse of power, when in its exercise power itself becomes powerless, while its hands must be directed by another's. Had the reign of Edward the Sixth been prolonged, we should have had a polemical monarch, if we may judge by a collection of texts of Scripture, in proof of the doctrine of justification by faith, which exists in his own handwriting, written in French, and dedicated to his uncle.*

This was a calamitous period for the nation: we derive little consolation when we discover, that, not more than three centuries ago, our ancestors were a semi-barbarous race. We seem to be consulting the annals of some Asiatic dynasty, when we see a royal nephew tranquilly affixing his signature to the death-warrants of his uncles: imprisonment or exile would have been too tender for these state victims. We see one brother attainted by another, and the scaffold finally receiving both; and a Queen of England, in the captivity of the Romish superstition, hailing with a benediction her own *autos da fè*. What we should have gained, had the accomplished prince lived, we cannot conjecture; but what the nation were spared by the death of the melancholy Mary, is not

* It will be found in the additional manuscripts at the British Museum.

doubtful. Edward and Mary were opposite bigots, and both alike presumed that they were appointed to the work of sanctity; but every reform which requires to be carried on by coercion will long appear ambiguous to the better tempered. The bigotry as well as the puerile taste of the prince appeared when he composed a comedy or interlude against *the Whore of Babylon*, and *the False Gods;* but the brawls of polemics, at least, are more tolerable than torture and the sacrifice of fire.

It was one of the first evils of the Reformation, that the people were ill prepared to receive their emancipation. All sense of subordination rapidly disappeared in society; even the spell of devotion was dissolved; and the people seemed to consider, that, having rid themselves of one spurious mode of religion, there was no longer any religion in the world. "Thus for religion ye keep no religion," wrote the learned Cheke, in once addressing an armed multitude, who cruelly would not tolerate the Christianity of their neighbors.

An immature reformation is accompanied by certain unavoidable inconveniences. Its first steps are incomprehensible to the thoughtless, and too vague for the considerate; doing what it should not do, and leaving undone what it ought to do; comprehending too much, and omitting many things. A revolutionary reform breaks out with an ebullition of popular feelings; but, in escaping from one tyranny, men do not necessarily enter into freedom. The reformer, in abandoning what is known, looks to an uncertain and distant futurity: the anti-reformer appeals to precedent, and clings to what is real; his good is positive, and his evil is not concealed. In the removal of some long-standing evils in civil society, some portion of good goes with them; for many of these served as expedients to supply certain wants, and therefore, relatively, were or may be beneficial. Even our old prejudices, when scrutinized, often will be found to have struck their roots in the common welfare. The complicate interests of civil society were at first a web woven by strong hands; so that much of

the antiquated may retain its soundness, while the gloss of the new may set off but a loose and flimsy texture. These are some of the difficulties of an age of innovation, which may wisely check without stopping the velocity of its movements. The only unerring reformer who partakes not of human infirmities, neither deceived by illusions nor overcome by prejudices, and whose only wisdom is experience, must be that silent and unceasing worker of the destinies of man, — Time!

At the period now before us, the crisis and the re-action were alike remarkable. The people who witnessed in four successive reigns four different systems of religion, mutable with the times, amidst their incertitude were in fact taught a religious scepticism. One of the great innovations in divine service was that of preaching from the pulpit, instead of reading set homilies or other prescribed lessons, by which the Romanists had reduced their whole devotion to a mumbled ritual and a mechanical service, — formularies and forms which ceased to operate on the heart, and carried on a religion that was not religious.

The introduction of *preaching* appears to have been followed by an unhappy effect. Latimer, in the rude simplicity of his style, complains of some that went to church for the benefit of being "lulled into a nap." There was a still greater grievance in this novel custom of preaching: for, from the pulpits, the turbulent were rousing the passions of the people by declaiming against what some termed "the abuses which ought to be put away;" while others, persevering in their old doctrine, were alarming their auditors for the loss of what had been put away. Pulpit thundered against pulpit; for it was not only the reformer, but the anti-reformer, who were the preachers. The fact was, that, by an avaricious policy, "the court of augmentation," which had to pension the monks of the suppressed houses, filled up the vacant benefices as fast as they occurred, by appointing these annuitants to curtail the pension-list. The enemy was thus settled in the camp of

the reformers. This spirit of division was caught by the rude stage of that day, in their comedies or interludes. This inundation of popular clamor was only to be stayed by coercion, — by proclamations, and orders in council. The Council of State issued their orders, or rather their instructions, how the preachers were to preach, and that none but the licensed should be permitted to ascend into the pulpit. Even Latimer himself was discountenanced for his apostolical freedoms by inveighing against the gentry, who sent their sons to college instead of educating them at home for the church. Academical degrees were abrogated as anti-Christian; Greek was heresy; and all human learning was to be vain and useless to "the gospellers." As the preachers were to be licensed, it came to the turn of the players and the printers not to enact or print their interludes without a special license from the privy council; and at length the interludes were actually inhibited for "containing matter relating to sedition;" and this proclamation more particularly specifies those that "play in English." The Romanists had their interludes as well as the Reformers. Bishop Percy once observed, that the excellence of the drama, as every wise man would have it, is to form a supplement to the pulpit, — this literally occurred in the present instance; but the pulpit was itself as disorderly, to use the words of the proclamation, "as any light and fantastical head could list to invent and devise." Our most skilful delver into dramatic history, amidst his curious masses of disinterments, has brought up this proclamation. We must connect the state of these rude players with these rude preachers: the interludes were nothing more than reflections from the sermons; player and preacher were the same. By connecting these together, we form a juster notion of their purpose than we find in the isolated fact. There was now sedition in religion as well as in politics.

The prevalent fervor scattered its sparks through all the ranks of society, and the thoughts of all were concentrated on

the sole object of "the new religion." The Reformation was the great political topic in the court of Edward the Sixth: discussions in theology were no longer confined to colleges or to the clergy. Our poets, ever creatures of their age, reflecting its temper, and who best tell its story, confined their genius to ballads and interludes, making rough sport for loungers and for the common people; or, in their quieter moods, were devoted to metrical versions from the Scriptures. In a history of our vernacular literature, the introduction of a versified psalter and of psalm-singing forms an incident; as the passion for psalmody itself is a portion of the history of the Reformation. "This infectious frenzy of sacred song," as Thomas Warton describes what he condemns as puritanic, we adopted from the practice of Calvin, who had introduced psalm-singing into the Geneva discipline, but really had himself borrowed it from the popularity of the first psalms in French metre, by Clement Marot. This natural and fine genius, as a commutation for an irregular life, — and he had been imprisoned for eating flesh in Lent, — was persuaded by the learned Vatable, the Hebrew professor, to perform this signal act of penance. The gay novelty charmed the court, and was equally delightful to the people: every one chose the psalm which expressed his own personal feelings or described his own condition, adapted to some favorite air for the instrument or the voice. At the time it could have been little suspected, that while Calvin was stripping the religious service of its pageantry, and denuding it even of its decent ceremonies, he would have condescended to any thing so human as a tune and a chorus: yet the austere reformer of Geneva showed no deficient knowledge of human nature when he contrived to make men sing in concert or carol in the streets, and shorten their work by a song cheerful or sad; for psalms there are for joy or for affliction, effusions for all hours, suitable to all ranks.*

* See an article on Psalms in vol. ii. of "Curiosities of Literature." — Ed.

Another incident in which our vernacular literature was remotely connected was the calling-in of the ancient rituals, missals, and other books of the Latin service, and establishing the Book of Common Prayer in the common language. But the people at large seemed reluctant to alter their antiquated customs, which habit had long endeared to them. While they had listened to an unintelligible Mass, they had, from their childhood, contracted a spirit of devotion. Their fathers had bowed to the Mass as a holy office from time immemorial; and from their childhood they had attached to it those emotions of holiness which were not the less so by their erroneous association of ideas. When their religion became a mere Act of Parliament, and their prayers were in plain English, all appeared an affair of yesterday. The church service seemed no longer venerable, the new priesthood no longer apostolical; and the giddy populace protested against the common dues exacted by their neighbor the curate for their marriages and baptisms and funerals. They forsook their churches, and even refused to pay tithes.

It is in revolutionary periods that we find men adapted for these rare occasions; who, had they not lived amid the commotions around them, had probably not emerged out of the sphere of their neighbors. Such minds quickly sympathize with popular grievances and popular clamors, and obtain their reformation, often at the sacrifice of their individual interest, as if the cause were their appointed vocation. They are advocates who plead, imbued even by all the prejudices of their clients; they are organs resounding the fulness of the passions around them: a character of this order is the true representative of the multitude; and we listen to all their cries in the single voice of such a man.

And such a man was Robert Crowley, a universal reformer through Church and State; whose unwearied industry run the pace of his zeal; whose declarations were as open as his designs were definite; and whose resolved spirit pursued

its object in every variable form which his imagination could invent, and which incessant toil never found irksome.

Crowley had been a student at Magdalen College at Oxford, and obtained a fellowship. At the close of the reign of Henry the Eighth, Crowley appears to have sojourned in "the great city;" and, in that of Edward the Sixth, we must not be surprised to discover the Fellow of Magdalen established as a printer and bookseller, and, moreover, combining the elevated characters of poet and preacher. How it happened that a man of letters, and not undistinguished by his genius, adopted a mechanical profession, we may account for from the exigencies of the time. Possibly Crowley's fellowship was what Swift once called "a beggarly fettleship." In the hurried reform of the day, "the universal good" was attended by "a great partial evil." In the dissolution of the abbeys and priories, they had also demolished those useful exhibitions proceeding from them, by which poor students were maintained at the universities. Many, thus deprived of the means of existence at college, were compelled to forsake their Alma Mater, and seek another course of life. It was probably this incident which had thrown this learned man among the people. How Crowley contrived to fulfil his fourfold office of printer, bookseller, poet, and preacher, with eminent success, the scanty notices of his life disappoint our curiosity. We would gladly enter into the recesses of this man's arduous life. Did he partition the hours of his day? What habits harmonized such clashing pursuits? Was he a sage whose wisdom none of his followers have gathered? Was the shop of the studious man haunted by learned customers? When we think of the printer's press and the bookseller's counter, we are disposed to inquire, Where mused the poet, and where stood the preacher?

Crowley is the author of many controversial pieces, and some satirical poems reflecting the manners and the passions of his day, all which enjoyed repeated editions. But he was

not less a favorite sermonizer. He touched a tremulous chord in the hearts of the people, and his opinions found an echo in their breasts. The pulpit and the press, perhaps, had been his voluntary choice, to print out what he had spoken ere it perished, or offer a supplement to a sermon in some awful tome of theology and reform. His Pulpit and his Press!—"those two prolific sources of faction," exclaimed Thomas Warton.

As a printer and book-vender, Crowley is distinguished by that curiosity of research which led him to be the first publisher of "the Visions of Piers Ploughman," which had hitherto slept in the dust of its manuscript state. Warton restricts the merit of his discovery merely to the fervor of a controversialist eager to propagate his own opinions; and truly the bold spirit of reform, and the satirical strokes on the ecclesiastics of the times of Edward the Third, in that remarkable and unknown author, were in unison with a reformer in the age of Reformation. It must be confessed that the historian of our poetry cherished some collegiate prejudices, and that his native good-humor is liable to change when his pen scourges a puritan and a predestinarian, as was Robert Crowley. But Warton wrote when he imagined that the suppressed absurdities of Popery required no longer any strong satire from a Calvinist; and as Crowley, too, lived to hold many dignities in the reign of Elizabeth, Crowley appeared to Warton to be the member of "a church whose doctrines and polity his undiscerning zeal had a tendency to destroy." Strype has only ventured to describe Crowley as "an earnest professor of religion." The meek curate of Low-Leyton could not rise to the magisterial indignation of one of the "heads of houses;" one who, at least, ought to have been, and who, I understand, probably missed the honor and the profit by his own ingenuous carelessness.

One of the most striking productions of this earnest reformer, for its freedom, was his address to the assembled

Parliament. The title is expressive, — "An Information and Petition against the *Oppressors of the Commoners of this Realm.* Compiled and imprinted for this only purpose, — that, among them that have to do in the Parliament, some godly-minded men may hereat take occasion to speak more in the matter than the author was able to write." Crowley too modestly alludes to any deficiencies of his own: his "information" is ample, and doubtless conveyed to the ear of those "who had to do in the Parliament" what must have startled the oldest senator.

Who are "the oppressors of the poor commoners"? All the orders in society, — the clergy, the laity, and, above all, "the Possessioners"!

This term, "the Possessioners," was a popular circulating coinage struck in the mint of our reformer, and probably included much more than meets our ear. Every land-owner, every proprietor, was a "Possessioner." Whether in an orderly primitive commonwealth there should be any "Possessioners," might be a debatable point in a parliament composed of "the poor Commons" themselves, with our Robin for their speaker. But, however this might be, "the Possessioners of this realm," as he calls them, "could only be reformed by God working in their hearts, as he did in the primitive church, when the *Possessioners* were contented and very willing *to sell their possessions, and give the price thereof to be common to all the faithful believers.*" This seems perfectly intelligible; but our reformer judged it required some explanation, as thus: "He would not have any to take him as though he went about to make all things common." Doubtless there were some propagators of this new revelation of a primitive Christian community, and as little doubt that Robin himself was one; for he adds, "If the Possessioners know how they ought to bestow their possessions," and he had already instructed them, in that case "he doubted not *it should not need to have all things made common.*" Such

was the logic of this primitive radical reformer. A bland compromise, and a sturdy menace! This "grievance" of the "Possessioners" might be reformed, till poverty itself became a test of patriotism. They had yet to learn that to impoverish the rich is not to enrich the poor.

At that day they were bewildered in their notions of property and their standards of value: they had neither discovered the sources nor the progress of the wealth of a nation. They murmured at importation, for which they seemed to pay the penalties; and looked on exportation as a conveyance of the national property to the foreigner. They fixed the prices at which all consumable articles were to be sold; the farmer's garner was inspected; the landlords who became graziers were denounced; forestallers and regrators haunted the privy councils of the king; the markets were never better supplied, and the people wondered why every article was dearer. About this time, the prices of all commodities, both in France and England, had gradually risen. The enterprise of commerce was probably working on larger capitals. As expenses increased, the landlords held that they were entitled to higher rents. In Crowley's denunciations, "God's plague" is invoked against all "lease-mongers, pilling and polling the poor commoner." The Parliament of Henry the Eighth had legalized the interest of money at ten per cent; Robin would have this "sinful act" repealed: loans should be gratuitous by the admonition in Luke, "Do ye lend, looking for no gain thereof." In this manner he applies the text against usury. They seemed to have no notion that he who bought ever intended to sell. This rude political economist proposed that all property should be kept stationary. No one should have a better portion than he was born to. Where, then, was to be found the portion of "the poor commoner" not born to any? or him whose loss of fortune was to be repaired by industry and enterprise? Prices advanced; double rents, double tithes! Our radical preacher attacks his brother

ecclesiastics. "We can neither come into the world, nor remain in it, nor go out of it, but they must have a fleece! Let it be lawful to perform all their ministries by ourselves: we can lay an honest man in his grave without a set of carrion-crows scenting their prey." The splendor of the ancient landed aristocracy and the prodigal luxury of the ecclesiastics more forcibly struck their minds than those silent arts of enlarged traffic which were perpetuating the wealth of the nation, and producing its concomitant evils.

While the people were thus agitated, divided, and distracted, the same state of disorder was shaking the more intelligent classes of society. Our mutable governments during four successive reigns gave rise to incidents which had not occurred in the annals of any other people. With the higher orders, it was not only a conflict of the old and the new religions; public disputations were frequent, creeds were yet to be drawn from school-divinity, the artificial logic of syllogisms and metaphysical disputations held before mixed audiences, where the appellant, when his memory or his acumen failed him, was disconcerted by the respondent; but when the secular arm was called in, alternately as each faction predominated, and the lives and properties of men were to be the result of these opinions, then men knew not what to think, nor how to act. What had served as argument and axiom within a few years, a state proclamation condemned as false and erroneous. A dereliction of principle spread as the general infection of the times; and, in despair, many became utterly indifferent to the event of affairs to which they could apply no other remedy than to fall in with the new course, whatever that might be.

The history of the universities exhibits this mutable picture of the nation. There were learned doctors, who, under Henry the Eighth, abjured their papacy; under Edward, vacillated, not knowing which side to lean on; under Mary, recanted; and, under Elizabeth, again abjured. Many an apostate on

both sides seemed converted into zealous penitents; persecutors of the friends with whom they had consorted, and deniers of the very opinions which they had so earnestly propagated. The facility with which some illustrious names are recorded to have given way to the pressure of events seems almost incredible; but, for the honor of human nature, on either side there were some who were neither so tractable nor so infirm.

The heads of houses stood for antiquity, with all its sacred rust of time: they looked on reform with a suspicious eye, while every man in his place marked his eager ejector on the watch. Under Edward the Sixth, Dr. Richard Smith, a potent scholastic, stood forth the stern advocate of the ancient order of things. However, to preserve his professorship, this doctor recanted of "his popish errors:" shortly afterwards he declared that it was no recantation, but a retractation signifying nothing. To make the doctor somewhat more intelligible, and a rumor spreading that "Dr. Smith was treading in his old steps," he was again enforced to read his recantation, with an acknowledgment that "his distinction was frivolous, both terms signifying the same thing." He did not recant the professorship till Cranmer invited Peter Martyr from Germany to the chair of the disguised Romanist. The political Jesuit attended even the lectures of his obtrusive rival, took notes with a fair countenance, till suddenly burst the latent explosion. An armed party menaced the life of Peter Martyr, and a theological challenge was sent from the late professor to hold a disputation on "the real presence." Peter Martyr protested against the barbarous and ambiguous terms of the scholastic logic, and would only consent to explain the mystery of the sacrament by the terms of *carnaliter* and *corporaliter;* for the Scriptures, in describing the Supper, mention the flesh and the body, not the matter and substance. He would, however, indulge them to accept the terms of *realiter* and *substantialiter.*

There was "a great hubbub" at Oxford on this most eventful issue. The popish party and the reformers were alike hurried and busied; books and arguments were heaped together; the meanest citizen took his stand. The reforming visitors of Edward arrived: all met, all but Dr. Smith, who had flown to Scotland, on his way to Louvain. However, he had left his able deputies, who were deep in the lore in which it appears Peter Martyr required frequent aid to get on. Both the adverse parties triumphed; that is usual in these logomachies: but the Romanists account for the success of the Reformed by the circumstance that their judges were Reformers.

Such abstruse subjects connected with religious associations, and maintained or refuted by the triumph or the levity of some haughty polemic, produced the most irreverent feelings among the vulgar. As the Reformation was then to be predominant, the common talk of the populace was diversified by rhymes and ballads; and it was held, at least by the wits, that there was "no real presence," since Dr. Smith had not dared to show himself. The papistical sacrament was familiarly called "Jack in the Box," "Worm's meat," and other ludicrous terms, one of which has descended to us in the term which jugglers use of *hocus pocus*. This familiar phrase, Anthony Wood informs us, originated in derision of the words, "Hoc est corpus," slovenly pronounced by the mumbling priest in delivering the emblem as a reality. As opprobrious words with the populace indicate their furious acts, scandalous scenes soon followed. The censers were snatched from the hands of the officiating priests; mass-books were flung at their heads; all red-lettered and illuminated volumes were chopped in pieces by hatchets: nor was this done always by the populace, but by students, who in their youth and their reform knew of no better means to testify their new loyalty to the visitors of Edward. One of the more ludicrous scenes among so many shameful ones was a funereal exhibi-

tion of the schoolmen. Peter Lombard, "the master of sentences," accompanied by Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas, carried on biers, were tumbled into bonfires!

Five years after these memorable scenes, the same drama was to be repeated, performed by a different company of actors. Religion assumed a new face: that which had hardly been established was blasted by the name of heresy. All who had flourished under Edward were now called in question. The ancient tenants now ejected the new-comers, and affronted them by the same means they had themselves been affronted. No one at first knew how affairs were to turn out: some still clung to the reform, others were reverting to the old system. There were in fact, for some time, two religions at once in the university. The Common Prayer-book in English was, however, but faintly read, while the Mass was loudly chanted. Jewel's letter to the queen was cautiously worded. This zealous reformer in an unhappy moment had yielded to his fears, and subscribed a recantation, which he soon after abjured before a Protestant congregation in Germany. When Peter Martyr heard the little bell ring to Mass, he sighed, and said "that bell would destroy all the sound doctrine in the college." Gardiner gave him a safe-conduct homewards, which saved Peter Martyr from the insolent triumph of his rival, the scholastic Dr. Smith, and the Spanish friars with whom Mary supplied his place.

But the Marians also burned books, as likewise men!

The funeral of the schoolmen carried on their biers was too recent to be forgotten; and, in return, all Bibles in English, and all the commentators on the Bible in the vernacular idiom, and which, we are told, "for their number seemed almost infinite," were thrown together in the market-place; and the lighted pyre proclaimed to Oxford the ominous flames of superstition, which consumed not long after, opposite to Baliol College, the great unfortunate victims of reformation. There Latimer and Ridley bowed their spirits in the fires·

while Cranmer from the top of the Bocardo witnessed the immolation, praying to God to strengthen them, and felt in anticipation his own coming fate. Then followed expulsions and emigrations. We have a long list of names. Five years afterwards, such was the rapid change of scenery, these fugitives returned to repossess themselves of their seats, and were again and finally the ejectors under Elizabeth.

The history of this mutable period is remarkably shown in the singular incident of Catherine, the wife of Peter Martyr, and St. Frideswide.

Peter Martyr, when celibacy was the indispensable virtue of an ecclesiastic, brought his wife into his college, and also his bawling children. This spirit of reform was an abhorrence to the conscience and the quiet of the monks. A brothel, a prostitute, and a race of bastards, formed, according to the old inmates, the residence of the family of the reformer. The wife of Martyr died, and was interred near the relics of St. Frideswide. In the Marian days, it was resolved that the departed female should be condemned for heresy; and since the corpse lay not distant from "that religious virgin, St. Frideswide," it should be disinterred; and the Dean of Christ Church had the remains of Martyr's wife dug up, and buried in the dunghill of his stable. Five years after, when Elizabeth reigned, the fate of the disturbed bones of the wife of Martyr was recollected; and by command, with patience and ingenuity, the sub-dean collected from the dunghill the bones which time had disjointed, and placed them in a coffin in the cathedral till they should be reburied with greater solemnity A search was at the same time made by the sub-dean for the bones of St. Frideswide, which were not found where they had reposed for centuries. They had been hidden by some relic-adoring Catholic, to save them from the profane hands of the triumphant heretics of Edward the Sixth. In the obscurest part of the church, after much seeking, two silken bags were discovered, which had carefully preserved the relics

of St. Frideswide. The sub-dean, who seems to have been at once a Romanist and a Reformer, considered that these bones of Peter Martyr's wife and the female saint should receive equal honors. He put them in the same coffin, and they were re-interred together. This incident provoked some scoffs from the witless, and some grave comments from those who stood more in awe of the corpse of the saint than of the sinner. Thus they were buried and coupled together; and a scholar, whether a divine or a philosopher his ambiguous style will not assure us, inscribed this epitaph: —

Hic jacet Religio cum Superstitione.

Did the profound writer insinuate a wish, that in one grave should lie mingled together religion with superstition? or that they are still as inseparable as the bones of the wife of Peter Martyr with the bones of St. Frideswide? Or did he mean nothing more than the idle antithesis of a scholar's pen?

At this uncertain crisis of the alliance between Church and State, the history of our English Bible exhibits a singular picture of the Church, which, from courting the favor of the great, gradually grew into its own strength, and rested on its own independence. We perceive it first attracting the royal eye, and afterwards securing the patronage of ministers. This phenomenon is observable in the Bible commanded to be printed by Edward the Sixth. There we view his majesty's portrait printed and illumined in red. Under Elizabeth, in the same Bible, omitting only the papistic fish-days, we are surprised by the two portraits of the Earl of Leicester, placed before the Book of Joshua, and Cecil Lord Burleigh, adorning the Psalms. This is the first edition of the Bishops' Bible. But subsequently, in 1574, we discover that the portraits of the royal favorites are both withdrawn, and a map of the Holy Land substituted, while the arms of Archbishop Parker seem to have been let into the vacancy which Lord Burleigh erst so gloriously occupied. The map of the Holy Land

unquestionably is more appropriate than the portraits of the two statesmen; but the arms of the archbishop introduced into the Scriptures indicate a more egotistic spirit in the good prelate than perhaps becomes the saintly humility of the pastor. The whole is an exhibition of that worldliness which in its first weakness is uncertain of the favor of the higher powers, but which cannot conceal its triumph in its full-grown strength: the great ecclesiastic, no longer collecting portraits of ministers, stamps his own arms on the sacred volume, to ratify his own power!

PRIMITIVE DRAMAS.

Scriptural dramas, composed by the ecclesiastics, furnished the nations of Europe with the only drama they possessed during many centuries. Voltaire ingeniously suggested, that Gregory of Nazianzen, to wean the Christians of Constantinople from the dramas of Greece and Rome, composed sacred dramas: *the Passion of Christ* afforded one of the deepest interest. This remarkable transition might have occurred to this father of the Church from the circumstance, that the ancient Greek tragedy had originally formed a religious spectacle; and the choruses were turned into Christian hymns. Warton considered this fact as a new discovery in the obscure annals of the earliest drama.* The temples of the idols were for ever to be closed; for true religion and triumphant faith could show the miraculous Being, who, blending the celestial with the human nature, was no longer the empty fable of the poet. The gross simplicity of the inventors, and the undisturbed faith of the people, perceived nothing profane in the representation of an awful mystery by a familiar play. Christian or Pagan, the populace remains the same, and must be amused: the invention of scriptural plays would keep alive their religious faith, and sacred dramas would be a happy substitute for those of which they were denied evermore to be spectators.

* Warton's "Hist. of Eng. Poetry," iii. 195, 8vo edition; but it has been suggested that, as St. Gregory composed more poetically, this earliest sacred drama was the production of a later writer, another Gregory, Bishop of Antioch, A.D. 572. The dramatist, however, was an ecclesiastic; and that point only is important on the present occasion.

This attempt to Christianize the drama did not produce an immediate effect: but the Roman dramatic art could not fail to degenerate with the Roman Empire; and the actors themselves were but the descendants of the mimi, a race of infamous buffoons, objects of the horror and the excommunication of the primitive Fathers.*

In the obscurity of the mediæval period, the origin of these sacred dramas in Europe is lost. They are only incidentally noticed by those who had yet no notions of the drama. But, though in England their remains are found at a much earlier period than in any other country, this seems to have been a mere accident, from the utter neglect, or rather ignorance, of other nations of the origin of their own early drama: for these scriptural plays, judging by those which we possess, seem struck in the same mint, and are worked out of a common stock; and their appearance, we can hardly doubt, was coeval. Monks were the writers or inventors, and a general communication was kept up with Rome throughout every European realm. The subjects and the personages of these biblical dramas are treated with the same inartificial arrangement, and, when translated, it would be difficult to distinguish between a French, a Flemish, or an English mystery; and in their progressive state, branching out into three distinct classes, they passed in all countries through the same mutations.

* TERTULLIAN, CHRYSOSTOM, LACTANTIUS, CYPRIAN, and others have vehemently declaimed against theatres and actors. It is doubtless the invectives of the Fathers which have been the true origin of the puritanic denouncement against "stage-plays" and "play-goers." The Fathers furnished ample quotations for PRYNNE in his "Histriomastix." It is, however, curious to observe, that at a later day, in the thirteenth century, the great schoolman, Thomas Aquinas, greatly relaxed the prohibitions: confessing that amusement is necessary to the happiness of man, he allows the decent exercise of the histrionic art. See a curious tract, "the Stage Condemned," which contains a collection of the opinions of the Fathers, 1698. Riccoboni, "Sur les Théâtres," does not fail to appeal to the great schoolman.

It has been conjectured that they were first introduced into Italy, from its intercourse with the metropolis of the Greek Empire; but, when we have recourse to its literary recorder, we gather nothing but ambiguity. Tiraboschi is dubious whether the early Italian mysteries exhibited in the year 1264 were any thing more than a dumb show, or the processional display of a religious pageant. Decided, on system, not to approve of such familiar exhibitions of sacred themes, the Jesuit has cautiously noticed two companies who evidently had performed a mystery, or miracle-play. In that piece there is a direction that "an angel and the virgin *sing*;" but our learned Jesuit will not venture even to surmise that "the virgin and the angel" *acted* their parts, but merely chanted a poem.* The literary antiquary Signorelli inclines to fix the uncertain date of the first sacred drama so late as in 1445.† In France, these early scriptural exhibitions were so little comprehended, that Le Grand d'Aussy, in his pretension that his nation possessed the drama in the thirteenth century, derives the origin of their mysteries from such pieces as the three fabliaux which he has given as the earliest dramas.‡ So little conversant in his day — not a distant one — were the French antiquaries with a subject which has of late become familiar to their tastes. We learn nothing positive of their "Mysteries" till their "Confraerie de la Passion" was incorporated in 1402.

* "Tiraboschi," iv.

† These dramas subsequently formed no uncommon spectacle in the streets of Italy: whence some Italian critics have fancied that the Gothic poem of Dante — his Hell, his Purgatory, and his Paradise — was an idea caught from the threefold stage of a mystery which often fixed his musings in the streets of his own Florence. As late as in the year 1739, a mystery of *the Damned Soul*, acted by living personages, was still exhibited by a company of strollers in Turin: we have the amusing particulars in a letter by Spence. — *Spence's Anecdotes*, 397. They have sunk to the humble state of puppet-shows, and are still exhibited at Carnival-time at Venice and elsewhere.

‡ See the note and this extraordinary blunder in *Fabliaux*, ii. 152.

The earliest of these representations necessarily would be in Latin,* and performed in monasteries by the ecclesiastics themselves, on festival days: in this state, how could they have been designed for the people? Aware of this difficulty, and convinced that these holy plays were in their origin intended for popular instruction and recreation, it has been conjectured that the Latin mystery was accompanied by a pantomimic show for the benefit of the people; but an impatient concourse could be little affected by the action of the performers, almost as incomprehensible as the language was unintelligible. The people, a great animal only to be fondled in one way, as usual, worked out their own wants: they taught learned clerks the only method by which they were to be amused, by having the same thing after their own fashion, and to be comprehended in their own language; and the day at last arrived when even the people themselves would be actors. In the obscurity of the mediæval period, the literary antiquary has often to feel his way in the darkness, till among uncertain things he fancies that he grasps the palpable. We are not furnished with precise dates; but some natural circumstances may account for the introduction of the mysteries in the *vernacular idiom.* About the eighth century, merchants carried on their trades in the great fairs; and, to attract the people together, jugglers, minstrels, and buffoons were well paid, and the populace flocked. Such a multitudinous concourse appears to have created alarm among their great lords, and the ecclesiastics in vain proscribed these licentious revelries. It would be nothing more than a stroke of their accustomed policy, if we imagine, that, seeing the people were eager after such public entertainments, the monks should take them into their own hands; and offering a far more imposing exhibition than even the tricks of jugglers, combining piety with merri-

* Mr. Wright has published a curious collection of Latin mysteries of the twelfth century. [For a detailed notice of other printed collections, see note to "Curiosities of Literature," vol. ii. p. 15. — Ed.]

ment, at once awe and delight the people by their scriptural histories and the legends of saints, in the language common to them all, thus enticing them from profane mummeries. It was a revolution in the history of the people, who, without education, seemed to grow learned in the mysteries and to be witnesses of miracles!

This account is not incongruous with another, probably not less true, and which indeed has been received as indisputable among the more ancient literary historians of France, and is well known by the verses of Boileau in his "Art of Poetry." Palmers and pilgrims, — the one returning from the East, bearing in their caps the hallowed palm-branch of Palestine; and the other from some distant shrine, their chaplets and cloaks covered with the many-colored scallops, — taking their stand in thoroughfares, and leaning on their staffs, while their pendent relics and images attracted the gazer, would win an audience from among the people. These venerable itinerants or semi-saints recited their sacred narratives in verse, or even in prose: they had sojourned amid "the holy places" which they described; they had their adventures to tell, serious or comic; and that many of these have entered into the great body of ROMANCE, and were caught up by the Trouveres, we can easily imagine. These strollers excited the piety and contributed to the amusement of their simple auditors, who, in the course of time, occasionally provided for these actors a stage on a green in the vicinage of their town: thus an audience of burghers and clowns, and no critics, was first formed. The ecclesiastics adopted performances so certain of popular attraction, and became the sole authors of these inartificial dramas, as they were of romances and chronicles. They had but one object, and knew to treat it only in one way. They imagined that they were instructing the people by initiating them into scriptural history, — the only history then known; and, by keeping the sources of popular recreation in their own hands, they looked for their success in

the degree they excited their terror or their piety, and not less their ribald merriment: and, for the people, the profane drollery and the familiar dialogue were as consistent with their feelings as the articles of their creed, for which they would have died, as well as laughed at.

These primeval dramas are not inconsiderable objects in the philosophy of literary history. In England,* and probably throughout Europe, they long kept their standing: they linger in Italy, and still possess devout Spain. Not long since, at Seville, they had their mysteries adapted to the seasons, — the Crucifixion for Good Friday, and the Nativity for Christmas, and the Creation whenever they chose; and a recent editor of the plays of Cervantes assures us, that these *Autos Sacramentales* still form a source of amusement and edification to the pilgrims at the shrine of St. Jago de Compostella, which it seems still receives such visitors.†

These scriptural plays were known in England before 1119: they formed public performances in the metropolis in 1180. They were then confined to the monasteries; and, when the audience required the space, they were exhibited in churches, and sometimes even in cemeteries. So true it is that the first theatres were churches, and the first actors

* Perhaps the very last remains of such rude dramatic exhibitions are yet to be traced in our counties, — about Christmas-tide, or rather old Christmas, whose decrepit age is personified. In Lancashire and Yorkshire, and also in Dorsetshire, families are visited by "the great Emperor of the Turks" and St. George of England, or by the lion-hearted Richard. After a fierce onset, ringing their tin swords, the Saracens groan and drop. The leech appears, holding his phial: from some drops the dead survive their fate, and rise for the hospitable supper. The dialogue, however, has not been so traditional as the exhibition. The curious portion of these ancient exhibitions is, therefore, totally lost in the substitutions of the rude rustics. The wassail-songs, or the Christmas-carols, have come down with fewer losses than these ancient "Tales of the Crusaders;" for the language of emotion and the notice of old picturesque customs cling to the memory, and endure with their localities. But for these we must travel far from the land of the Cockneys.

† Bouterwek.

churchmen. Some reprobated the sight of the priestly character, or the "fols clers," "mad clerks," in their grotesque disguisings: if they were sanctioned by one pope, they were condemned by another. The clergy, except on some rare occasion, when exhibiting before royalty or nobility,* were at length not reluctant to yield their places to a new race of performers. In the metropolis, they never lost their control over these representations; for they consigned them to the care of their inferior brethren, the parish clerks: but in provincial towns it was not long ere the people themselves discovered that they, with some little assistance from the neighboring monasteries, were competent to take them into their own hands. The honest members of guilds or corporations, of mechanics and tradesmen, formed themselves into brotherhoods of actors, ambitious of displaying their mimetic faculty to their townsfolk. The play had now become the people's play, and the scale of the representation widened at every point: it was to be acted in an open plain, and it was to extend sometimes through eight days.† Such was the concourse of spectators; and indeed the performers were themselves a crowd. All were anxious to show themselves in some part, and such a play might require nearly a hundred personages. In a miracle-play, the whole life of a saint, from the cradle to martyrdom, was displayed in the same piece: the youth, the middle-age, and the caducity of the eminent

* The clergy long continued to assist at these exhibitions, if they did not always act in them. In 1417, an *English mystery* was exhibited before the Emperor Sigismund, at the Council of Constance, on the usual subject of the Nativity. The *English bishops* had it rehearsed several days, that the actors might be perfect before their imperial audience. We are not told in what language their *English mystery* was recited; but we are furnished with a curious fact, that "the Germans consider this play as the first introduction of that sort of dramatic performance in their country." — *Henry of Monmouth*, by the Rev. J. E. Tyler, ii. 61.

† The Spanish nation, unchangeable in their customs, have retained the last remains of the ancient mysteries in the divisions of their dramas, called "Jornadas."

personage, required to be enacted by three different actors; so that there were the first, the second, and the third Jacob, to emulate one another, and provoke bickerings; townsfolk when acting, it appears, being querulously jealous. Something of scenical illusion was contrived, and what in the style of the green-room is termed "properties"* was attempted, by the description we find in the directions to the actors, and by the mischances which occurred to the unpractised performers by their clumsy machinery. Their mode of representation was so much alike, that the same sort of ludicrous accidents have come down to us, relative to our native mysteries, as occurred in those of France. Bishop Percy has quoted a malicious trick played by the Flemish owl-glass, the buffoon of the times, among his neighbors in one of these mysteries:† a Judas had nearly hanged himself, and the cross had nearly realized a crucifixion. Among these unlucky attempts, they gilded over the face to represent the Eternal Father: the honest burgher, nearly suffocated, never appeared again; and the next day it was announced, that, for the future, the Deity should lie "covered by a cloud." A scaffold was built up of three or more divisions for "the stage-play." Paradise opened at the top; the world moved in the centre; and the yawning throat of an immeasurable dragon, as the devils run in and out, showed the bottomless pit: and whenever the protruding wings of that infernal monster approached, "and fanned" the near spectators, the terror was real.

These mysteries abound with a licentiousness to which the rude simplicity of the age was innocently insensible; a ludicrous turn is often given to the solemn incidents of Holy Writ,

* "A sheep-skin for Jews, wigs for the Apostles, and vizards for Devils," appear in the churchwardens' accounts at Tewkesbury, 1578, "for the players' geers." — *Hist. of Dramatic Poetry*, ii. 140. The same diligent inquirer has also discovered the theatrical term "properties," in allusion to the furniture of the stage, and which is so used by Shakspeare, employed in its present sense in an ancient morality. — *Ib.*, ii. 129.

† "Reliques of Ancient Poetry," i. 129.

and the legend of a saint opened an unbounded scope to their mother-wit. The usual remark of the people, when they had been pleased with a performance, was, "To-day the mystery was very fine and devout, and the devils played most pleasantly." * The devils were the buffoons, and compliment one another with the most atrocious titles. The spectators, who shed tears at the torturous crucifixion, would listen with delight to the volume of reciprocal abuse voided by Satan and the satanic, whose very names, at any other time or place, would have paralyzed the intellect. This strange mixture of religious and ludicrous emotions attests that the authors and the spectators were in the childhood of society, satisfied that they were good Christians. Such were the earliest attempts of our dramatic representations; but men must tread with naked feet before they put on the sock and buskin.

Several of these annual exhibitions in provincial towns have descended to us, as those of the Chester Whitsun-plays, and others in great towns. Originally, doubtless, written in Latin, they soon submitted to the Norman rule, vigilant to practise every means to diffuse the *French* language; but in this state they could not deeply delight the great body of the Saxon people.† The monk, Ralph Higden, under the influ-

* "Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française." — The proverbial phrase is accompanied by a very superfluous remark: "Ce mot a passé d'usage avec les mœurs de ces temps anciens." — See also "Dict. de Trevoux," art. "Mystère."

† That the translation of the "Chester Plays" was made from the *French*, and not from the *Latin*, as Warton supposed, is ingeniously elucidated by Mr. Collier. In the English translation, some of the original French passages have been preserved. — *Annals of the Stage*, ii. 129.

When Warton found that these plays were translated into English, he concluded that they were from the Latin. He totally forgot that the French was long the prevalent language of England. And this important circumstance, too often overlooked by preceding inquirers, has thrown much confusion in our literary history.

The best account we have of Ralph Higden may be found in the *first* volume of Lardner's Cyclopædia on "the Early History of the English Stage," a work of some original research, at page 193.

ence of that national spirit which had been evinced by some former native monks, directed his efforts to the relief of his countrymen. Thrice he journeyed to Rome to obtain the permission of his holiness to translate these holy plays into the vernacular *English* for the people.* Three journeys to Rome indicate some difficulty about the propriety of this mode of edifying the populace, of which, indeed, there were conflicting opinions. But the time was favorable: the youthful monarch on the throne, our third Edward, was beginning to encourage the use of the vernacular idiom; and, in 1338, Higden put forth mysteries in the native tongue, and thus accomplished what, in the great volume of the "Polychronicon," he has so energetically exhorted should be done for the maintenance of what he termed "the birth-tongue."

The day could not fail to arrive in the gradations of the public intellect, even such as it then was, that society would feel the want of something more directly operating on their sympathies or their daily experience than the unvaried scriptural tale. Mysteries, however devout, by such familiar repetition would lose something of their awfulness, as miracle-plays would satiate their tastes as they became deficient in the freshness of invention. The first approaches of this change in their feelings are observable in the later miracle-plays, where, as a novel attraction to the old plays, abstract personations are partially introduced; but this novelty was to be carried much higher, and to include a whole set of new dramatic personages. A more intellectual faculty was now exercised in the plan of the MORALITY, or moral play.† This was no inconsiderable advancement in the progress of society.

* The earliest and rudest known miracle-play in English has been published by Mr. Halliwell, — "the Harrowing of Hell." It was written in the reign of Edward the Second, and is a curious instance of the childhood of the drama.

† The reign of Henry the Sixth may be fixed upon as the epoch of a new species of dramatic representation, known by the name of a Moral. — *Collier*, v. 23.

it was deepening the recesses of the human understanding, awakening and separating the passions; it was one of those attempts which appear in the infancy of imagination, consisting, not of human beings, but of their shadowy reflections, in the personification of their passions; in a word, it was allegory. To relieve the gravity of this ethical play, which was in some danger of calling on the audience for deeper attention than their amusement could afford, the morality not only retained their old favorite, the Devil, but introduced a more natural buffoon in the Vice, who performed the part of the domestic fool of our ancestors, or the clown of our pantomime.

These unsubstantial personages of allegory, these apparitions of human nature, were to assume a more bodily shape, when not only the passions, but the individual characters whom they agitated, were exhibited in every-day life; not, however, yet venturing into a wide field of society, but peeping from a corner: it was nothing more than a single act, satirical and comic, in a dialogue sustained by three or four professional characters of the times. It was called the INTERLUDE, or "*a play between*," to zest by its pleasantry the intervals of a luxurious, and sometimes a wearisome banquet. The most dramatic interludes were the invention of JOHN HEYWOOD, the jester of Henry the Eighth. The Scottish bard, Douglas, the Bishop of Dunkeld, alludes to these interludes, in his "Paleys of Honour:" —

> "Grete was the preis the feast royál to sene:
> At ease they eat, with INTERLUDES between." *

* The reader may gratify his curiosity, and derive considerable amusement, from the skilful analysis of primitive dramas, both manuscript and printed, which Mr. COLLIER has drawn up with true dramatic taste. There are also copious specimens in a curious article on Heywood in the volume on "the English Drama" of Lardner's Cyclopædia, — the labor of a learned antiquary. [One of Heywood's interludes was printed by the Percy Society from his manuscript in the British Museum, under the editorial care of Mr. Fairholt, who prefixed an analysis with copious extracts from his other interludes.] The progress of the drama was similar both in France and England:

Such was the march of events, the steppings which were conducting the national genius to the verge of tragedy and comedy: a vast interval of time and labor separates the writers of these primitive plays from the fathers of dramatic art; yet, however ludicrous to us the simplicity of the age, often these singular productions betray shrewd humor and natural emotions. To condemn them as barbarous and absurd would be forming a very inadequate notion of the influence of these earliest of our European dramas on their contemporaries. An enlightened lover of the arts has said, perhaps with great truth, that Raphael never received from his age such flattering applause, and excited such universal approbation, as did Cimabué, the rude father of his art. The first essays strike more deeply than even the masterpieces of a subsequent age, after all its successful labor; for its more finished excellence depends partly on reflection, as well as on sensation.

The mystery and the morality lingered among us; but, in the improved taste and literature of the court of Henry the Eighth, the facetious INTERLUDE, while it was facetious, won

yet our vivacious neighbors seem to have invented a peculiar burlesque piece of their own, under the title of *Sotties*, and whose chief personage takes the quality of *Prince des Sots;* and *La Mère Sotte*, who is represented with her infant *Sots*. These pieces still retained their devout character, with an intermixture of profane and burlesque scenes, highly relished by the populace. "Ils le nommèrent par un quolibet vulgaire, *Jeux de Pois pilez*, et ce fut selon toutes les apparences à cause de mélange du sacré et du profane qui régnait dans ces sortes de jeux." The cant phrase which the people coined for this odd mixture of sacred and farcical subjects, of *Mashed Peas*, may lose its humor with us; but we find by Bayle, art. "D'Assoucy," that they were collected and printed under this title, and fetched high prices among collectors. These *Sotties* were acted by a brotherhood calling themselves *Enfans sans Soucy.*—PARFAIT: *Hist. du Théâtre Français*, i. 52. One of their chief composers was PIERRE GRINGOIRE, of whose rare *Sotties* I have several reprints by the learned Abbé Caron. Gringoire invented and performed his *Sotties*, in ridicule of the pope, on a scaffold or stage, to charm his royal master, Louis the Twelfth, in 1511. For an ample list of his gay satires, see "Biog. Universelle," art. "Gringoire."

the royal smile. The successive agitations of the age, however, could not fail to reflect its tempers in these public exhibitions. In the reforming government of Edward the Sixth, the miracle-plays were looked on as Romish spectacles, and were fast sinking into neglect, when the clergy of the papistic queen retrograded into this whole fabulous mythology; adepts not only in the craft of miracles, but desirous, by these shows, or "plays of miracles," to revive the taste in the imaginations of the people. The public authorities patronized what recently they had laughed at or had scorned. On Corpus Christi Day, the Lord Mayor and the Privy Council were spectators of "the Passion of Christ," always an affecting drama; and it was again represented before this select audience: and on St. Olave's Day, the truly "miracle-play" of that legendary saint was enacted in the church dedicated to the saint.*

The history of the INTERLUDE more particularly marks an epoch; for it enters into our political history. Mysteries and moralities were purely religious or ethical themes: but the comic interludes took a more adventurous course; and their writers, accommodating themselves to the fashions of the day, were the organs of the prevalent factions then dividing the unquiet realm.

From the earliest moment of the projected reformation, or emancipation from the papal dominion, by Henry, we discover the players of interludes at their insidious work; but affairs were floating in that uncertain state when the new had by no means displaced the old. In 1527, Henry the Eighth was greatly diverted at an interlude where the heretic Luther and his wife were brought on the stage, and the reformers were ridiculed.† The king, in the creed and the ceremonies, remained a Romanist; and, in 1533, a proclamation inhibits "the playing of interludes concerning doctrines now in ques-

* Strype's "Mem. of Eccles. Hist.," iii. 379.

† "Annals of the Stage," i. 107.

tion and controversy."* "The Defender of the Faith" was still irresolute to defend or to attack. In 1543, an act of Parliament was passed for the control of dramatic representations; and, at this later date, this reforming monarch decreed that "no person should play in interludes any matter contrary to the doctrines of the Church of Rome"! Chronology in history is not only useful to date events, but to date the passions of sovereigns. It was absolutely necessary for Edward the Sixth, on his ascension, immediately to repeal this express act of Parliament of his father;† and then the emancipated interluders now, openly, with grave logic or laughing ridicule, struck at all "the Roman superstitions." Hence we had Catholic and Protestant dramas. The Romanists had made very free strictures on Cromwell, Cranmer, and their followers; and on the side of the reformed we have no deficiency of oppugners of the Romish Church. Under Henry the Eighth, we have the sacred drama of "Every-man," a single personage, by whom the writer not unaptly personifies human nature. This drama came from the Romanists to recall the auditors back to the forsaken ceremonies and shaken creed of their fathers. Under Edward the Sixth, we have "Lusty Juventus," whom Satan and his old son Hypocrisy, with an extraordinary nomenclature of "holy things," would inveigle back to that seductive harlot, "Abominable Living," which the reformer imagined was the favorite Dulcinea of "the false priests."‡ On the accession of Mary, this queen hastened a proclamation against the interludes of the reformers. The term used in the proclamation looks like an ironical allusion to a word which now had long been bandied on the lips of the populace. It specifies to be for "the *reformation* of busy meddlers in matters of religion." A strict watch was

* Warton's "Hist. of Eng. Poetry," iii. 428, 8vo.

† Kastell's "Collection of Statutes," fo. 32—d.

‡ Both these ancient dramas are reprinted in Hawkins's "Origin of the English Drama." Many such dramas remain in manuscript.

kept on the players, some of whom suffered for enacting a reformed interlude. Such plays seemed to have been patronized in domestic secrecy. The interference of the Star Chamber was called forth in 1556 for the total suppression of dramatic entertainments. In many places, some magistrates had slackened their pursuit after "players," and reluctantly obeyed the public authorities. The first act of Elizabeth resembled in its character those of her brother Edward and her sister Mary, however opposite were the systems of their governments. The queen put a sudden stop to the enacting of all interludes which opposed the progress of the Reformation; there seemed to be no objection to any of a different cast: but Elizabeth lived to be an auditor of more passionate dramas than these theological logomachies performed on the stage, where the dull poet had sometimes quoted chapter and verse in Genesis or St. Matthew.

It is not generally known, that, while these Catholic and Protestant dramas were opposed to each other in England, at the same period the Huguenots in France had also entertained the derisory Muse of the more comic interludes. There was, however, this difference in the fortunes of the writers: as in France the government had never reformed nor changed their position, there could have been no period which admitted of the public representation of these satirical dramas. In their dramatic history, it was long considered that the subjects of these Hugonistic dramas were too tender to bear the handling; and the brothers Parfait, in their copious "History of the French Theatre," only afford a slight indication of "the turbulent Calvinists," who had spread "pieces of dangerous heresy and fanaticism against the pope, the cardinals, and the bishops; works which could not be noticed without profaning the page"!—and therefore they refrain from giving even their titles! It is in this spirit, and with such apologies, that historians have often castrated their own history. The existence of these dramas might have escaped our knowledge,

had not the more enlightened judgment of the Duke de la Vallière supplied what the more stubborn Romanists had suppressed. This lover of literature has favored the curious with the interesting analysis of two rare French Protestant plays, "Le Marchand Converti," in 1558; and "Le Pape Malade et tirant à sa Fin," in 1561. Allowing largely for the gross invectives of the Calvinist, — *les impiétés*, — they display an original comic invention, and sparkle with the most lively sallies.* It is remarkable that "Le Marchand Converti," at such an early period of modern literature, is a regular comedy of five acts, introduced by a prologue in verse: odes are interspersed; and each act concludes with a chorus, whom the author calls "the company." The classical form of this unacted play, instinct with the spirit of the new reform, betrays the work of a learned hand.

* "Bibliothèque du Théâtre Français," iii. 263, ascribed to the Duke de la Vallière. He has preserved many passages exquisitely humorous. He felt awkwardly in performing his duty to his readers, after what his predecessors, Messieurs Parfait, had declared; and, to calm the terrors of *les personnes scrupuleuses*, it is amusing to observe his plea, or his apology, for noticing these admirable anti-papistic satires: "They are outrageous, and abound with impieties; but they are extremely well written for their time, and truly comic. I considered that I could not avoid giving these extracts, were it only to show to what lengths the first pretended reformers carried their unreasonable violence against the holy father and the court of Rome." The apology for their transcription, if not more ingenuous, is at least more ingenious, than the apology for their suppression.

THE REFORMER BISHOP BALE; AND THE ROMANIST JOHN HEYWOOD, THE COURT JESTER.

Bale, Bishop of Ossory, and John Heywood, the court jester, were contemporaries, and both equally shared in the mutable fortunes of the satiric dramas of their times; but they themselves were the antipodes of each other: the earnest Protestant Bale, the gravest reformer, and the inflexible Catholic Heywood, noted for "his mad, merry wit," form one of those remarkable disparities which the history of literature sometimes offers.

Bale was originally educated in a monastery: he found an early patron, and professed the principles of the Reformation; and, like Luther, sealed his emancipation from Catholic celibacy by a wife, whom he tenderly describes as "his faithful Dorothea." It was a great thing for a monk to be mated with such constancy at a time when women were usually to be described as shrews, or worse. From the day of marriage, the malice of persecution haunted the hapless heretic: such personal hatreds could not fail of being mutual. He seems to have too hastily anticipated the Reformation under Henry the Eighth; for, though that monarch had freed himself from "the Bishop of Rome," he had by no means put aside the doctrines; and Bale, who had already begun a series of two and twenty reforming interludes in his "maternal idiom," found it advisable to leave a kingdom but half reformed. He paused not, however, till he had written a whole library against "the Papelins:" the last production always seemed the most envenomed. On the death of Henry, he unex-

pectedly appeared before Edward the Sixth, who imagined that he had died. Bale had the misfortune to be promoted to the Irish bishopric of Ossory, — to plant Protestantism in a land of Papistry! Frustrated in his unceasing fervor, Bale escaped from martyrdom by hiding himself in Dublin. The death of Edward relieved our Protestant bishop from this sad dilemma; for, on the accession of Mary, he flew into Switzerland. There he indulged his anti-papistical vein: the press sent forth a brood, among which might have been some of better growth, for he labored on our British biography and literature; but, as there were yet but few Protestants to record, it flowed, and sometimes overflowed, against all the friends of the Papacy. Pits, who subsequently resumed the task, a sullen and fierce Papist, in revenge omitted, in the line of our illustrious Britons, Wickliffe and every Wickliffite. Such were the beginnings of our literary history. On the accession of Elizabeth, his country received back its exile, but Bale refused to be reinstated in his Irish see, and sunk into a quiet prebendary of Canterbury. Fuller has called our good bishop "Bilious Bale." Some conceive that this bishop has suffered ill treatment merely for having thrown out some remarkable or abominable invectives. Proselytes, however sincere in their new convictions and their old hatreds, both operating at once, color their style as some do their faces, till by long use the heightened tint seems faint; and they go on deepening it, and thus at last the natural countenance is lost in the artificial mass.

If Bale were no poet, in the singular dramas we have, he at least displays a fluent invention: he tells plainly what is meant, which we like to learn; and I do not know whether it be owing to his generally indifferent verse that we sometimes are struck by an idiomatic phrase, and a richness of rhymes peculiar to himself, which sustain our attention.*

* One of these interludes has been recently published by the Camden Society, under the skilful editorship of Mr. Collier, from a manuscript cor-

Of JOHN HEYWOOD, the favorite jester of Henry the Eighth and his daughter Mary, and the intimate of Sir Thomas More, whose congenial humor may have mingled with his own, more table-talk and promptness at reply have been handed down to us than of any writer of the times. His quips and quirks and quibbles are of his age; but his copious pleasantry still enlivens: these smoothed the brow of Henry, and relaxed the rigid muscles of the melancholy Mary. He had the *entrée* at all times to the privy-chamber, and often to administer a strong dose of himself, which her majesty's physicians would prescribe. He is distinguished as Heywood the epigrammatist: a title fairly worn by the man who has left six centuries of epigrams, collected and adjusted as many English proverbs in his verse, besides the quaint conceits of "crossing of proverbs."* Of these six hundred epigrams, it is possible not a single one is epigrammatic: we have never had a Martial. Even when it became a fashion to write books of epigrams half a century subsequently, they usually closed in a miserable quibble, a dull apothegm, or at the best, like those of Sir John Harrington, in a plain story rhymed. Wit, in our sense of the term, was long unpractised, and the modern epigram was not yet discovered.

Heywood, who had flourished under Henry, on the change in the reign of Edward, clung to the ancient customs. He was a Romanist; but, had he not recovered in some degree from the cecity of superstition, he had not so keenly exposed, as he has done, some vulgar impostures. It happened, however, that some unlucky jest, trenching on treason, flew from the lips of the unguarded jester: it would have hanged

rected by Bale himself in the Devonshire collection: it is entitled "Kynge Johan" [and founded on events in his reign, made subservient to the ultra Protestantism of Bale]. Others have been printed in the "Harleian Collection," vol. i.; and in Dodsley's "Old English Drama."

* That is, proverbs with humorous answers to them. — See the "Bibliographical and Critical Catalogue," by Mr. Payne Collier, of Lord Francis Egerton's "Library of Early English Literature," p. 2.

some; but pleasant verses promptly addressed to the young sovereign saved him at the pinch. However, he gathered from "the council" that this was no jesting-time; and he left the country in the day that Bale was returning from his emigration under King Henry. On Mary's accession, Bale again retired, and Heywood suddenly appeared at court. Asked by the queen, "What wind blew him there?" — "Two specially: the one to see your majesty!" he replied. "We thank you for that," said the queen: "but, I pray you, what is the other?" "That your grace might see me!" There was shrewdness in this pleasantry, to bespeak the favor of his royal patroness. Four short years did not elapse ere Elizabeth opened her long reign; and then the merry Romanist for ever bid farewell to his native land, while Bale finally sat beside his English hearth. These were very movable and removable times, and no one was certain how long he should remain in his new locality.

The genius of HEYWOOD created "the merrie interlude:" unlike BALE, as in all things, he never opened the Bible for a stage-play, but, approaching Comedy, he became the painter of manners, and the chronicler of domestic life. Warton certainly has hastily and contradictorily censured Heywood, without a right comprehension of his peculiar subjects; yet he admired at least one of Heywood's writings, in which, being anonymous, he did not recognize the victim of his vague statements. Warton and his followers have obscured a true genius for exuberant humor, keen irony, and exquisite ridicule, such as Rabelais and Swift would not have disdained, and have not always surpassed. One of his interludes is accessible for those who can revel in a novel scene of comic invention. This interlude is "the Four P's, — the Palmer, the Pardoner, the Poticary, and the Pedler." Each flouts the other, and thus display their professional knaveries.*

* Dodsley's "Old Plays," vol. i.

The ludicrous strokes of this piece could never have come from a bigot to the ancient superstition, however attached to the ancient creed. We cannot tell how far the jester may have been influenced by a proclamation of 28th of Henry the Eighth, to protect "the poor innocent people from those light persons called pardoners by color of their indulgences," &c. He has curiously exhibited to us all the trumpery regalia of papistry; as he also exposed "the Friery" in another interlude, which has all the appearance of a merry tale from Boccaccio.

So plays the jocund spirit of Heywood the jester, in his minstrel-verse and pristine idiom; but we have now to tell another tale. Heywood is the author of a ponderous volume, and an interminable "parable" of "the Spider and the Fly." It is said to have occupied the thoughts of the writer during twenty years. This unlucky "heir of his invention" is dressed out with a profusion of a hundred woodcuts, — then rare and precious things, — among which starts up the full-length of the author more than once. Warton impatiently never reached the conclusion, where the author has confided to us the secret of his incomprehensible intention. There Warton would have found that "we must understand that the spiders represent the Protestants, and the flies the Catholics; that the maid with the broom sweeping away the cobwebs (to the annoyance of their weavers) is Mary, armed with the civil power, executing the commands of her Master (Christ) and her mistress (Mother Church)." We see at once all the embarrassments and barrenness of this wearying and perplexed fancy. Warton contents himself with what he calls "a sensible criticism," taken from Harrison, a Protestant minister, and one of the partners of Holinshed's Chronicle: it is as mordacious as a periodical criticism. "Neither he who made this book, nor any who reads it, can reach unto the meaning." Warton, to confirm "the sensible criticism," alleges as a proof of its unpopularity, that it was never

reprinted; but it was published in 1556, and Mary died in 1558. A vindication of "the maid with the broom" might be equally unwelcome to "spiders and flies."

How it happened that the court jester who has sent forth such volumes of mirth could have kept for years hammering at a dull and dense poem, is a literary problem which perhaps admits of a solution. We may ascribe this aberration of genius to the author's position in society. Heywood was a Romanist from principle: that he was no bigot, his free satires on vulgar superstitions attest. But the jester at times was a thoughtful philosopher. One of his interludes is "the Play of the Weather," where the ways of Providence are vindicated in the distribution of the seasons. But "mad, merry Heywood" was the companion of many friends — Papists and Protestants — at court and in all the world over. His creed was almost whole in broken times; perhaps agreeing a little with the Protestant, and then reverting to the Romanist. In this unbalanced condition, mingling the burlesque with the solemn, unwilling to excommunicate his friend the Protestant "spider," and intent to vindicate the Romanist "fly," often he laid aside, and often resumed, his confused emotions. It might require dates to settle the precise allusions: what he wrote under Henry and Edward would be of another color than under the Marian rule. His gayety and his gravity offuscate one another; and the readers of his longsome fiction, or his dark parallel, were puzzled, even among his contemporaries, to know in what sense to receive them. Sympathizing with "the fly," and not uncourteous to "the spider," our author has shown the danger of combining the burlesque with the serious; and thus it happened that the most facetious genius could occupy twenty years in compounding by fits and starts a dull poem which neither party pretended rightly to understand.

ROGER ASCHAM.

It would, perhaps, have surprised Roger Ascham, the scholar of a learned age, and a Greek professor, that the history of English literature might open with his name; for in his English writings he had formed no premeditated work, designed for posterity as well as his own times. The subjects he has written on were solely suggested by the occasion, and incurred the slight of the cavillers of his day, who had not yet learned that humble titles may conceal performances which exceed their promise, and that trifles cease to be trivial in the workmanship of genius.

An apology for a favorite recreation, that of archery, for his indulgence in which his enemies, and sometimes his friends, reproached the truant of academic Greek; an account of the affairs of Germany, while employed as secretary to the English embassy; and the posthumous treatise of "the Schoolmaster," originating in an accidental conversation at table, — constitute the whole of the claims of Ascham to the rank of an English classic; a degree much higher than was attained by the learning of Sir Thomas Elyot and the genius of Sir Thomas More.

The mind of Ascham was stored with all the wealth of ancient literature the nation possessed. Ascham was proud, when alluding to his master, the learned Cheke, and to his royal pupil, Queen Elizabeth, of having been the pupil of the greatest scholar, and the preceptor to the greatest pupil, in England; but we have rather to admire the intrepidity of his genius, which induced him to avow the noble design

of setting an example of composing in our vernacular idiom He tells us in his "Toxophilus," "I write this English matter in the English language, for Englishmen." He introduced an easy and natural style in English prose, instead of the pedantry of the unformed taste of his day; and adopted, as he tells us, the counsel of Aristotle, "to speak as the common people do, to think as wise men do."

The study of Greek was the reigning pursuit in the days of Ascham. At the dispersion of the Greeks on the loss of Constantinople, the learned emigrants brought with them into Europe their great originals; and the subsequent discovery of printing spread their editions. The study of Greek, on its first appearance in Europe, alarmed the Latin Church, and was long deemed a dangerous and heretical innovation. The cultivation of this language was, however, carried on with enthusiasm; and a controversy was kindled, even in this country, respecting the ancient pronunciation. A passion for Hellenistic lore pervaded the higher classes of society. There are fashions in the literary world as sudden and as capricious as those of another kind, and which, when they have rolled away, excite a smile, although possibly we have only adopted another of fresher novelty. The Greek mania raged. Ascham informs us, that his royal pupil, Elizabeth, understood Greek better than the canons of Windsor; and doubtless, while the queen was translating Isocrates, the ladies in waiting were parsing. Lady Jane Grey studying Plato was hardly an uncommon accident; but the touching detail which she gave to Ascham of her domestic persecution, on trivial forms of domestic life, which had induced her to fly for refuge to her Greek, has thrown a deep interest on that well-known incident. All educated persons then studied Greek. When Ascham was secretary to our ambassador at the court of Charles the Fifth, five days in the week were occupied by the ambassador reading with the secretary the Greek tragedians, commenting on Herodotus, and reciting the Orations of De-

mosthenes. But this rage was too capricious to last, and too useless to be profitable; for neither the national taste nor the English language derived any permanent advantage from this exclusive devotion to Greek, and the fashion became lost in other studies.

It was a bold decision in a collegiate professor, who looked for his fame from his lectures on Greek, to venture on modelling his native idiom with a purity and simplicity to which it was yet strange. Ascham, indeed, was fain to apologize for having written in English, and offered the king, Henry the Eighth, to make a Greek or a Latin version of his "Toxophilus," if his grace chose. "To have written in another tongue had been both more profitable for my study, and also more honest [honorable] for my name; yet I can think my labor well bestowed, if, with a little hinderance of my profit and name, may come any furtherance to the pleasure or commodity of *the gentlemen and yeomen of England.* As for the Latin and Greek tongue, every thing is so excellently done in them, that none can do better; *in the English tongue*, contrary, *every thing in a manner so meanly, both for the matter and handling, that no man can do worse.*"

Such were the first difficulties which the fathers of our native literature had to overcome. Sir Thomas Elyot endured the sneer of the cavillers for his attempt to inlay our unpolished English with Latin terms; and Roger Ascham, we see, found it necessary to apologize for at all adopting the national idiom. Since that day, neologisms have fertilized the barrenness of our Saxon, and the finest geniuses in Europe have abandoned the language of Cicero, to transfuse its grace into an idiom whose penury was deemed too rude for the pen of the scholar. Ascham followed his happier genius, and his name has created an epoch in the literature of England.

A residence of three years in Germany, in the station of confidential secretary of our ambassador to the Emperor Charles the Fifth, placed him in a more extensive field of ob-

servation, and brought him in contact with some of the most remarkable men of his times. It is much to be regretted that the diary he kept has never been recovered. That Ascham was inquisitive, and, moreover, a profound observer at an interesting crisis in modern history, and that he held a constant intercourse with great characters, and obtained much secret history both of persons and of transactions, fully appears in his admirable "Report of the Affairs and State of Germany, and the Emperor Charles's Court." This "Report" was but a chance communication to a friend, though it is composed with great care. Ascham has developed with a firm and masterly hand the complicated intrigues of the various powers, when Charles the Fifth seemed to give laws to Germany and Italy. This emperor was in peace with all the world in 1550; and, in less than two years after, he was compelled to fly from Germany, surrounded by secret enemies. Ascham has traced the discontents of the minor courts of Italian dukes and German princes, who gradually deserted the haughty autocrat; an event which finally led to the emperor's resignation. It is a moral tale of princes openly countenancing quietness, and "privily brewing debate," — a deep catastrophe for the study of the political student. Ascham has explained the double game of the court of Rome, under the ambitious and restless Julius the Third, who, playing the emperor against the French monarch, and the French monarch against the emperor, worked himself into that intricate net of general misery, spun out of his own crafty ambidexterity. This precious fragment of secret history might have offered new views and many strokes of character to the modern historian, Robertson, who seems never to have discovered this authentic document; yet it lay at hand. So little even in Robertson's day did English literature, in its obscurer sources, enter into the pursuits of our greatest writers.

Ascham's first work was the "Toxophilus, the Schole, or Partitions of Shootinge." At this time, fire-arms were so little

known, that the term "shooting" was solely confined to the bow, then the redoubtable weapon of our hardy countrymen. In this well-known treatise on archery, he did what several literary characters have so well done, — apologized for his amusement in a manner that evinced the scholar had not forgotten himself in the archer.

It affords some consolation to authors, who often suffer from neglect, to observe the triumph of an excellent book. Its first appearance procured him a pension from Henry the Eighth, which enabled him to set off on his travels. Subsequently, in the reign of Mary, when that eventful change happened in religion and in politics, adverse to Ascham, our author was cast into despair, and hastened to hide himself in safe obscurity. It was then that this excellent book (and a better at that time did not exist in the language) once more recommended its author: for Gardiner, the papal Bishop of Winchester, detected no heresy in the volume; and by his means, the Lords of the Council approving of it, the author was fully reinstated in royal favor. Thus Ascham twice owed his good fortune to his good book.

"The Schoolmaster," with its humble title, "to teach children to understand, write, and speak the Latin tongue," conveys an erroneous notion of the delight or the knowledge which may be drawn from this treatise, notwithstanding that the work remains incomplete; for there are references to parts which do not appear in the work itself. "The Scholemaster" is a classical production in English, which may be placed by the side of its great Latin rivals, the Orations of Cicero and the Institutes of Quintilian. It is enlivened by interesting details. The first idea of the work was started in a real conversation at table, among some eminent personages, on occasion of the flight of some scholars from Eton College, driven away by the iron rod of the master. "Was the schoolhouse to be a house of bondage and fear, or a house of play and pleasure?" During the progress of the work, the author lost his patron, and

incurred other disappointments: he has consigned all his variable emotions to his volume. The accidental interview with Lady Jane Grey; his readings with Queen Elizabeth in their daily intercourse with the fine writers of antiquity, and their recreations at the regal game of chess, — for such was the seduction of Attic learning, that the queen on the throne felt a happiness in again becoming the pupil of her old master, — these and similar incidents present those individual touches of the writer, which give such a reality to an author's feelings.*

It is to be regretted that Ascham held but an indolent pen. Yet it were hard to censure the man for a cold neglect of his fame, who seems equally to have neglected his fortune. Ascham has written little; and all he left his family was "this little book" ("the Schoolmaster"), and which he bequeathed to them, as the right way to good learning, "which if they follow, they shall very well come to sufficiency of living." This was an age when the ingenious clung to a patron: the widow and the son of Ascham found the benefits of this testamentary recommendation. It must, however, be confessed to have been but a capricious legacy; for no administrator might have been found to "the will." The age of patronage was never that of independence to an author.

Johnson, in his admirable "Life of Ascham," observed that "his disposition was kind and social: he delighted in the pleasure of conversation, and was probably not much inclined to business." It is certain that he preferred old books to

* There were five editions of "the Scholemaster" within twenty years of its first publication, of which that of 1573 is the most correct and rare. — *Dr. Valpy's* "*Cat.*" It is curious, in tracking the progress of an author's fame, to suspect that Ascham may owe his, in modern days, to the title of this work; for it was a learned schoolmaster who revived the name of Ascham by publishing an edition of "the Schoolmaster" in 1711, with notes, which was reprinted in 1743. His entire works were collected in 1761 by James Bennett, also a schoolmaster, with a Life by Dr. Johnson There has been a more recent edition, in 1815. "The Toxophilus," the "Manual of Archery," has been often reprinted since the taste for that amusement has revived among us.

pounds sterling; for once he requested to commute a part of his pension for a copy of the "Decem Rhetores Græci," which he could not purchase at Cambridge. His frequent allusions, in his letters when abroad, to "Mine Hostess Barnes," who kept a tavern at Cambridge in the reign of Edward the Sixth, with tender reminiscences of her "fat capons," and "the good-fellowship" there; and, further, his sympathy at the deep potation, when, standing hard by the emperor at his table, he tells us, "The emperor drank the best I ever saw; he had his head in the glass five times as long as any of us, and never drank less than a good quart at once of Rhenish wine;" and his determination of providing "every year a little vessel of Rhenish" for his cronies; and, still further, his haunting the cockpit, and sometimes trusting Fortune by her dice, notwithstanding that he describes "dicing" as "the green pathway of hell," — all these *traits* mark the boon companion loving his leisure and his lounge.

When engaged in public life, a collegiate fellowship appeared to him to offer supreme felicity. He writes thus: "Ascham to his friends: who is able to maintain his life at Cambridge, knows not what a felicity he hath." Such was the conviction of one who had long lived in courts.

But when we consider that Ascham was Latin secretary to Edward the Sixth, to Mary, and to Elizabeth, and intimately acquainted with the transactions of these cabinets, with the sovereigns, and the ministers, and during three years held a personal intercourse with the highest foreign court, we must regret, if we do not censure, the man, who, possessing these rare advantages, with a vigorous intellect, and a felicitous genius, has left the world in silence. Assuredly, in Ascham, we have lost an English Comines, who would have rivalled our few memoir-writers, who, though with pens more industrious, had not eyes more observant, nor heads more penetrating, than this secretary of three sovereigns.

There is, however, reason to conclude, that he himself was

not insensible to these higher claims which his station might have urged on his genius and his diligence. Every night during his residence abroad, which was of no short period, he was occupied by filling his Diary, which has not, in any shape, come down to us. He has also himself told, that he had written a book on "the Cockpit," one of the recreations of "a courtly gentleman." We cannot imagine that such writings, by the hand of Ascham, would be destroyed by his family, who knew how to value them. A modern critic, indeed, considers it fortunate for Ascham's credit, that this work on "the Cockpit" has escaped from publication. The criticism is fallacious; for, if an apology for cockfighting be odious, the author's reputation is equally hurt by the announcement as by the performance. But the truth is, that such barbarous sports, like the bear-baiting of England and the bull-fights of Spain, have had their advocates. Queen Elizabeth had appointed Ascham her bear-keeper; and he was writing in his character when disclosing the mysteries of the cockpit. But the genius of our author was always superior to his subject; and this was a treatise wherein he designed to describe "all kinds of pastimes joined with labor used in open place and in the daylight." The curious antiquary, at least, must regret the loss of Ascham's "Cockpit."

Ascham lived in the ferment of the Reformation: zealously attached to the new faith under Edward the Sixth and Elizabeth, how did he preserve himself during the intermediate reign, when he partook of the favors of the papistical sovereign? His master and friend, the learned Sir John Cheke, had only left for himself the choice of a recantation, or a warrant for execution; but, of Ascham's good fortune, nothing is known but its mystery. The novel religion had, however, early heated the passions and narrowed the judgment of Ascham. He wrote at a period when the Romanist and the Protestant reciprocally blackened each other. Ascham not only abhorred all Italians as papists, but all Italian books as

papistical. He invokes the interposition of the civil magistrate against Petrarch and Boccaccio, whose volumes were then selling in every shop. Baretti strikes at his manes with his stiletto-pen, in an animated passage;* and Warton is indignant at his denunciation of our ancient romances, of which the historian of our poetry says, "He has written in the spirit of an early Calvinistic preacher, rather than as a sensible critic and a polite scholar,"—he who, in his sober senses, was eminently both.

We may lament that the first steps in every revolution are taken in darkness, and that the re-action of opinions and prejudices is itself accompanied by errors and prejudices of its own. The bigotry of the new faith was not inferior to the old. The reforming Archbishop Grindal substituted the dull and barbarous Palingenius, Sedulius, and Prudentius, for the great classical authors of antiquity. The Reformation opened with fanaticism; and men were reformers before they were philosophers. Had Ascham, a learned scholar and a man of fine genius, been blessed with the prescient eye of philosophy, he had perceived that there was not more papistry in the solemn "Trionfi" of Petrarch, and not less "honest pastime" in a "merrie tale" of Boccaccio, than in cock-fighting and dicing; and that with these works the imagination of the public was gradually stepping out of a supernatural world of folio legends into a world of true nature, which led to that unrivalled era which immortalized the closing century.

We must recollect that the bigotry of the Reformation, or that which afterwards assumed the form of puritanism, in their absurd notion of the nature of idolatry attached to every picture and every statue on sacred subjects, eventually banished the fine arts from England for a long century, and retarded their progress even to our own days. A curious dialogue has been preserved by Strype, whose interlocutors

* Baretti's "Account of the Manners of Italy," ii. 137,—the most curious work of this Anglo-Italian.

are Queen Elizabeth and a dean. The dean having obtained some of those fine German paintings, those book-miniatures which are of the most exquisite finish, placed them in her majesty's prayer-book. For this the queen proscribed the dean, as she did those beautiful illuminations, as "Romish and idolatrous;" and with a Gothic barbarism, strange in a person with her Attic taste, commanded the clergy "to wash all pictures out of their walls." To this circumstance the painter Barry ascribes the backward state of the fine arts, which so long made us a by-word among the nations of Europe, and even induced the critical historian of the arts, Winkelman, to imagine that the climate of England presented an eternal obstruction to the progress of art itself: it was too long supposed that no Englishman could ever aspire to be an artist of genius. The same principle which urged Ascham to denounce all Italian books, instigated his royal pupil "to wash out all pictures;" and even so late as the reign of George the Third, when the artists of England made a noble offer, gratuitously to decorate our churches with productions of their own composition, the Bishop of London forbade the glorious attempt to redeem English art from the anathema of foreign critics.

Ascham, whose constitutional delicacy often impeded his studies, died prematurely. The parsimonious queen emphatically rated his value by declaring, that she would rather have lost ten thousand pounds; no part of which, during his life, the careless yet not the neglected Ascham ever shared.

Roger Ascham was truly what Pope has described Gay to have been, — "in wit a man, simplicity a child;" and he has developed his own character in his letters. Latin and English, they are among the earliest specimens of that domestic and literary correspondence in which the writer paints himself without reserve, with all the warm touches of a free pencil, gay sallies of the moment, or sorrows of the hour, confiding to the bosom of a friend the secrets of his heart and his condition; such as we have found in the letters of Gray and of Shenstone.

The works of Ascham, which are collected in a single volume, remain for the gratification of those who preserve a pure taste for the pristine simplicity of our ancient writers. His native English, that English which we have lost, but which we are ever delighted to recover, after near three centuries, is still critical without pedantry, and beautiful without ornament; and, which cannot be said of the writings of Sir THOMAS ELYOT and Sir THOMAS MORE, the volume of ASCHAM is indispensable in every English library, whose possessor in any way aspires to connect together the progress of taste and of opinion in the history of our country.

END OF VOL. I.

AMENITIES OF LITERATURE,

VOLUME II.

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AMENITIES OF LITERATURE.

PUBLIC OPINION.

How long has existed that numerous voice which we designate as "Public Opinion;" which I shall neither define nor describe?

The history of the English "people," considered in their political capacity, cannot be held to be of ancient date. The civil wars of England, and the intestine discords of the bloody Roses, seem to have nearly reduced the nation to a semi-barbarous condition: disputed successions, cruel factions, and family feuds, had long convulsed the land; and the political disorganization had been as eventful as were, not long after, the religious dissensions.

The grandfather of Elizabeth, Henry the Seventh, had terminated a political crisis. It was his policy to weaken the personal influence of the higher nobility, whose domination our monarchs had often fatally experienced. This seems to have been the sole "public" concern of this prudential and passionless sovereign, who, as the authority of the potent aristocracy declined, established that despotic regality which remained as the inheritance of the dynasty of the Tudors.

In the days of the queen's father, all "public interests" were concentrated in the court-circle and its dependencies.

The Parliament was but the formal echo of the voice which came from the cabinet. The learned Spelman has recorded, that, when the Lower House hesitated to pass the bill for the dissolution of the monasteries, they were summoned into the king's presence; and, the Commons being first kept in waiting some hours in his gallery, the king entered, looking angrily on one side, and then on the other: the dark scowl of the magnificent despot announced his thoughts; and they listened to the thunder of his voice. "I hear," said he, "that my bill will not pass; but I will have it pass, or I will have some of your heads."* I do not recollect whether it was on this occasion that his majesty saluted his faithful Commons as "brutes!" but the burly tyrant treated them as such. The penalty of their debates was to be their heads: therefore this important bill passed *nemine contradicente!*

However contemptuously this monarch regarded those who were within his circle, he was sufficiently enlightened in the great national revolution he meditated to desire to gain over the multitude on his side. The very circumstance of the king allowing, as the letters-patent run, "the free and liberal use of the Bible in *our own natural English tongue*, was a *coup d'état*, and an evidence that Henry at one time designed to create a people of readers on whom he counted to side with him. The people were already possessed of the Reformation before Henry the Eighth had renounced the papacy. The reformers abroad had diligently supplied them with versions of the Scriptures, and no small numbers of pamphlets printed abroad in English were dispersed among the early "gospellers," the expressive distinction of the new heretics, — a humble but fervent rabble of tailors, joiners, weavers, and other handicraftsmen, who left "the new for the old God," ready martyrs against the gross papistical impostures; and many females theological, who turned away from the corporal

* Spelman's "History of Sacrilege."

presence, and whom no bishop could seduce to courtesy to a saint.

The new concession made to this people was indeed received with enthusiasm. All flocked to read, or to be read to. Never were the Scriptures so artlessly scrutinized: they furnished whole scenes for interludes, and were tagged with rhymes for ballads. Even the grave judges, before they delivered their charges, prefaced them by a text. Each reader became an expounder, and new schismatics were busied with new heresies. The king had not calculated on this result; and when he found the nation abounded not with readers so much as with disputants, that controversies raged where uniformity was expected, Henry became so irritated at the universal distraction of opinion, that his first attempt to raise a public voice ended, as has been since often attempted, in its suppression. The permission to read the sacred volume was contracted by the most qualifying clauses. The noble and the gentry might read it "alone in their garden or orchard, or other retired places;" but men and women in the lower ranks were absolutely forbidden to read it, or to have it read to them.*

The clashing polemics of the brother and the sister of Elizabeth did not advance the progress of civil society. The novelists, if we may so term these lovers of novelty, flushed with innovation, were raging with every rapid change; while the ancients, in spite and in despondence, sullenly clung to the old, which they held could never be the obsolete. The first movements of the great reform seemed only to have transferred the late civil wars which had distracted the land to the minds of the people in a civil war of opinions.

When Elizabeth ascended the throne, there was yet no recognized "public" in the commonwealth: the people were mere fractional and incoherent parts of society. This heroic

* 34 Henry VIII.

queen, whose position and whose masculine character bear some affinity to those of the great Catharine of Russia, had to create "a people" subservient to the very design of advancing the regal authority in its ascendency. The policy of the maiden queen was that of her ancestors; but the same jealousy of the aristocracy turned her genius to a new source of influence, unknown to her progenitors, and which her successors afterwards hardly recognized. In the awful mutations through which society had been passing, some had been silently favorable to the queen's views. The population had considerably risen since the reign of Henry the Seventh.* Property had changed hands, and taken new directions; and independent classes in society were rising fast.

The great barons formerly had kept open houses for all comers and goers: five hundred or a thousand "blue coats" in a single family crowded their castles or their mansions,— these were "trencher slaves" and "swash bucklers;" besides those numerous "retainers" of great lords, who, neither menial nor of the household, yet yielded their services on special occasions, for the privilege of shielding their own insolence under the ostentatious silver "badge," or the family arms, which none might strike with impunity, and escape from the hostility of the whole noble family. In the opening scene of "Romeo and Juliet," our national bard has perpetuated the insolence of the wearers with all the reality of nature, and correctness of custom. Such troops of idling partisans were only reflecting among themselves the feuds and the pride of their rival masters,— shadows of the late civil wars which still lingered in the land.†

The first blow at the independent grandeur of the nobles

* Hallam's "Constitution of England," i. 8, 4to.

† The remains of this feudal pomp and power were visible even at a later period in the succeeding reign, when we find the Earl of Nottingham, in his embassy to Spain, accompanied by a retinue of five hundred persons, and the Earl of Hertford, at Brussels, carried three hundred gentlemen.

had been struck by the grandfather of the queen: the second was the consequence of the acts of her father. The new proprietors of the recently acquired abbey-lands, and other monastic property, were not only courtiers, but their humbler dependants; many of them the commissioners who had undervalued all these manors and lordships, that they might get such "Robin Hood's pennyworths" more easily by the novelty of "begging" for them. These formed a new body of proprietors, who gradually constituted *a new gentry*, standing between the nobles and the commonalty; and from the nature of their property they became land-jobbers, letting and underletting, raising rents, enhancing the prices of commodities, enclosing the common lands, and swallowing up the small farms by large ones. There arose in consequence a great change in agricultural pursuits, no longer practised to acquire a miserable subsistence: the land was changed into a new mine of wealth; and among the wealthiest classes of English subjects were the graziers, who indeed became the founders of many families.*

The nobles found their revenues declining, as an excess of expenditure surprised them: this changeable state only raised their murmurs; for they seemed insensible to the cause. Their ancient opulence was secretly consuming itself; their troops of domestics were thinned in numbers; and a thousand families disappeared, who once seemed to have sprung out of the soil, where whole generations had flourished through the wide domains of the lord. A great change had visibly occurred in the baronial halls. The octogenarians in Elizabeth's later days complained that the country was depopulating fast; and the chimneys of the great mansions which had smoked the year round now scarcely announced "a merry Christmas."

A transition from one state of society to another will always

* "The graziers have assured me of their credit, and some of them may be trusted for a hundred thousand pounds." — *Sir J. Harrington's Prologue to the Metamorphosis of Ajax.*

be looked on suspiciously by those who may deem the results problematical; but it will be eagerly opposed by those who find the innovation unfavorable to themselves. The results of the new direction of landed property, incomprehensible to the nobles, were abhorrent to the feelings of the people. Among "the people," that is, the populace, there still survived tender reminiscences of the warmth of the abbots' kitchens; and many a wayfaring guest could tell how erst, by ringing at the monastic gate, the wants of life had been alleviated. The monks, too, had been excellent landlords, living amid their tenants; and, while the husbandmen stood at easy rents, the public markets were regularly maintained by a constant demand. In the breaking-up of the monasteries, many thousands of persons had been dispersed; and it would seem, that, among that sturdy community of vagabonds which now rose over the land, some low Latin words in their "peddler's French," as the canting language they devised is called, indicate their origin from the familiar dialect of the ejected poor scholars of the late monastic institutions.

The commotions which rose in all parts of the country during the brief reign of Edward the Sixth were instigated by the ancient owners of these lands, who conceived that they had been disinherited by the spoliators: thus weakly they avenged their irrecoverable losses. Nor did such leaders want for popular pretences among a discontented populace, who, as they imagined, were themselves sufferers in the common cause. We are informed, on the indubitable authority of the diary of the youthful Edward, that "*the* PEOPLE had conceived a wonderful hatred against GENTLEMEN whom they held as *their enemies*." The king seems distinctly to distinguish the gentry from the nobility.

In the decline of the great households, a result, however, occurred, which tended greatly to improve the independent condition of "the people." The manual arts had been practised from generation to generation, the son succeeding the

father in the wide domains of some noble; but when the great lords were contracting the scale of their establishments, and failed to furnish occupation to these dependants, the mechanics and artificers took refuge in the towns: there localized, they were taught to reap the fruits of their own daily industry; and as their labor became more highly appreciated, and the arts of commerce were more closely pursued, they considerably heightened the cost of those objects of necessity or pleasure which supplied the wants or the luxuries of the noble. In becoming citizens, they ceased to be mere domestics in the great households; a separate independence was raised between the lord and his mechanic: the humble class lost something in leaving the happy carelessness of life for a condition more anxious and precarious; but the influence of the noble was no longer that of the lord paramount, but simply the influence of the customer over the tradesman; "an influence," as Hume shrewdly remarks, "which can never be dangerous to civil government."

We now distinctly perceive new classes in civil society rising out of the decline of the preponderating power of the great barons, and of the new disposition of landed property, — the gentry, the flourishing agriculturist, and those mechanics and artificers who carried on their trades independently of their former lordly patrons: we now, therefore, discern the first elements of popularity.

There was now "a people," who might be worthy of entering into the views of the statesman; but it was a divided people. Among them, the queen knew, lay concealed her domestic enemies: a more novel religion than the new was on the watch to shake her established church; and no inconsiderable portion of her subjects in their papal consciences were traitors. The arts of juncture, or the keeping together parts broken and separated, making hearts compliant which were stubbornly opposed to each other, demanded at once the firmness and the indulgence of the wisest policy; and such

was the administration of Elizabeth. A reign of continued struggle, which extended to nearly half a century, was a probationary period for royalty; and a precarious throne, while it naturally approximated the sovereign to the people, also taught the nation its own capacities, by maintaining their monarch's glory amid her external and internal enemies.

The nobility was to feel the weight of the royal prerogative: no noble families were permitted to intermarry, and no peer could leave the kingdom, without the license of the queen. But, at the very time she was ruling them with a potent hand, Elizabeth courted the eyes and the hearts of "the people:" she sought every occasion to exhibit her person in processions and progresses, and by her speech and manner shed her graciousness on the humblest of her subjects. Not slow to perceive their wants and wishes, she it was who first gave the people a theatre, as her royal style expressed it, "for the recreation of our loving subjects, as for our solace and pleasure;" and this at a time when her council were divided in their opinion.

Participating in the inmost feelings of the people, she commanded that the awful tomes of Fox's "Acts and Monuments" — a book written, as the author has himself expressed it, for "the simple people" — should be chained to the desk of every church and common hall. In this "Book of Martyrs," gathered from all quarters, and chronicling the obscurest individuals, many a reader, kindling over the lengthened page, dwelt on his own domestic tale in the volume of the nation. These massy volumes were placed easy of access for perpetual reference, and doubtless their earnest spirit multiplied Protestants.

No object which concerned the prosperity of the people but the queen identified herself with it: she saluted Sir Thomas Gresham as her "royal merchant;" and, opening with her presence his Exchange, she called it Royal. It is a curious evidence of her system to win over the people's loyalty, that

she suggested to Sir Thomas Wilson to transfuse the eloquence of Demosthenes into the language of the people, to prepare them by such solemn admonitions against the machinations of her most dreaded enemy. Our translator reveals the design by his title: "The Three Orations of Demosthenes, with those his fower Orations titled expressly and by name against King Philip of Macedonie, most needful to be redde in these dangerous dayes, of all them that love their countrie's libertie."* The queen considered the aptness of their application, and the singular felicity of transferring the inordinate ambition of Philip of Macedon to Philip of Spain. To these famous "philippics" was prefixed the solemn oath that the young men of Greece took to defend their country against the royal invader, "at this time right needful for all Christians, not only for Englishmen, to observe and follow."

It was not until eighteen years after that the Armada sailed from the shores of Spain, and this translation perpetuates an instance of political foresight.

The genius of Elizabeth created her age: surrounding herself by no puny favorites of an hour, in the circle of her royalty were seen the most laborious statesmen our annals record, and a generation of romantic commanders; the secretaries of state were eminently learned; and the queen was all these herself, in her tried prudence, her dauntless intrepidity, and her lettered accomplishments. The energies of the sovereign reached the people, and were responded to; the spirit-stirring events rose with the times: it was a reign of enterprise and emulation, a new era of adventure and glory. The heroes of England won many a day's battle in the Netherlands, in France, in Spain, and in Portugal; and the ships of England unfurled their flags in unknown seas, and left the glory of the maiden queen in new lands.

* Imprinted at London by Henrie Denham, quarto, without date; but the dedication to Sir William Cecil is dated 1570, — nearly twenty years after Sir Thomas Wilson's first publications "On Logic" and "On Rhetoric."

It would be no slight volume which should contain the illustrious names of a race of romantic adventurers, who lost their sleep to gain new trophies in a campaign, to settle a remote colony, or to give a name to a new continent. All ranks in society felt the impulse of the same electrical stroke; and even the cupidity of the mere trader was elevated into heroism, and gained a patent of heraldry.* The spirits of that age seemed busied with day-dreams, of discovering a new people, or founding a new kingdom. Shakspeare alludes to this passion of the times:—

> "Some to the wars, to try their fortune there;
> Some to discover islands far away."

If our Drake was considered by the Spaniard as the most terrible of pirates, in England he was admired as another Columbus. The moral feeling may sometimes be more justly regulated by the degree of latitude. The Norrises, the Veres, the Grenvilles, the Cavendishes, the Earl of Cumberland, and the Sidneys, bear a lustre in their characters which romance has not surpassed; and many there were as resolutely ambitious as Sir John Davies, who has left his name to the Straits still bearing it. Sir Henry Sidney, the father of Sir Philip, who became a distinguished statesman, had once designed to raise a new kingdom in America; and his romantic son resumed this design of founding an empire for the Sidneys. The project was secretly planned between our puerile hero and the adventurous Drake, and was only frustrated by the queen's arrest of her hero at Plymouth. Of the same batch of kingdom-founders was Sir Walter Rawleigh: he baptized

* In Sylvanus Morgan's "Sphere of Gentry," lib. iii. c. 9, is one of these patents of heraldry, granted to William Tollerson, a merchant of London, that his honors may be fitly conveyed to his offspring. He had fought and conquered in Africa; destroyed a small navy of "the Portugals," with whom he made attempt to league; and bore for his crest a demi-negro, in proper color, prepared to the conflict, with dart and pavice, gold; and a ship, sable, with all its equipage.

with the spirit of loyalty his "Virginia." Muscovy, at that stirring period, was a dominion as strange as America and the Indies. During the extraordinary events of this period, when Elizabeth had obtained a monopoly of the trade of that country, the czar proposed to marry an English lady: a British alliance, both personal and political, he imagined, should his subjects revolt, might secure an asylum in the land of his adoption. The daughter of the Earl of Huntington was actually selected by the queen to be the czarina; but her ladyship was so terrified at the Muscovite and his icy region, that she lost the honor of being a romantic empress, and the civilizer of all the Russias. Thus, wherever the winds blew, the name of Elizabeth was spread; "the great globe itself" seemed to be our "inheritance," and seemed not too vast a space to busy the imaginations of the people.

This was the time of first beginnings in the art of guiding public opinion. Ample volumes, like those of Fox, powerful organs of the feelings of the people, were given to them. The Chronicles of Hall and Holinshed opened for them the glory of the love of their fatherland. It was the genius of this active age of exploits which inspired RICHARD HAKLUYT to form one of the most remarkable collections in any language; yet it was solely to be furnished from our own records, and the mighty actors in the face of the universe were solely to be Englishmen. Now appeared the three tomes of "the Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries made by the English Nation," northward, southward, and westward, and at last "the new-found world of America;" a world, with both Indies, discovered within their own century! — these amazed and delighted all classes of society. The legendary voyages of the monkish chroniclers, their maritime expeditions, opening with the fabulous Arthur, hardly exceeded the simplicity of our first discoverers. Many a hero had led on the adventurers; but their secretaries and historians were often themselves too astonished at what they witnessed, and

staid too short a time, to recover their better judgment in new places, and among new races of men. Sanctioned by many noble and genuine adventures, not less authentic appeared their terrors and their wonder; in polar icebergs, or before that island which no ship could approach, wherein devils dwelt; or among the sunny isles of Greece, and the burning regions of Ormus and Malacca, and the far realms of Cambaya and Cathay; in Ethiopia and in Muscovy, in Persia and in Peru; on the dark coast of Guinea, and beyond in Africa; and in Virginia, with her feathered chiefs; with many a tale of Tripoli and Algiers, where Britons were found in chains, till the sovereign of England demanded their restitution; and of the Holy Land, where the peaceful crusaders now only knelt in pilgrimage. All this convinced them that the world was everywhere inhabited; and that all was veracious, as Sebastian Cabot, the true rival of Columbus, and perhaps our countryman, had marked in his laborious maps, which he had engraved, and which were often wondered at, as they hung in the Privy Gallery at Westminster. Alas for the readers of modern travels, who can no longer participate in the wild and awful sensations of the all-believing faith of "the home-bred wit" of the Elizabethan era, — the first readers of HAKLUYT'S immense collection!

The advancement of general society out of its first exclusive circles became apparent when "the public" themselves were gradually forming a component part of the empire.

"The new learning," as the free discussions of opinions and the popular literature of the day were distinguished, widely spread. Society was no longer scattered in distant insulations. Their observation was more extended, their thought was more grave; tastes multiplied, and finer sympathies awakened. "The theatre" and "the ordinary" first rose in this early stage of our civilization; and the ceaseless publications of the day, in the current form of pamphlets, were snatched up, even in the intervening pauses of theatrical

representation, or were commented upon by some caustic oracle at the ordinary, or in Powles's Walk. We were now at the crisis of that great moral revolution in the intellectual history of a people, when the people become readers, and the people become writers. In the closer intercourse with their neighbors, their insulated homeliness was giving way to more exotic manners: they seemed to imitate every nation while they were incurring the raillery or the causticity of our satirists, who are not usually the profoundest philosophers. The satirists are the earliest recorders of manners; but, fugitive historians of fugitive objects, they only sport on the surface of things. The progressive expansion of social life, through its homeliest transitions, is more clearly discerned in the perspective view; for those who are occupied by opening their narrow ways, and by lengthening their streets, do not contemplate on the architectural city which is reserved for posterity.

It was popular to ridicule the finical "Monsieur Traveller," who was somewhat insolent by having "swum in a gondola;" or to raise a laugh at him who had "bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, and his bonnet in Germany." It did not occur to our immortal satirist, that the taste which had borrowed the doublet and the bonnet had also introduced to his happier notice the tales of Bandello and the "Giuletta" of Luigi Porto. The dandy of Bishop Hall almost resembles the fantastic picture of Horace, in illustrating a combination of absurdities. Hall paints with vigor: —

> "A French head joined to neck Italian;
> His thighs from Germany, his breast from Spain:
> An Englishman in none, a fool in all."

But if this egregious man of fashion borrowed the wordiness of Italian compliment, or the formality of the Spanish courtesy, he had been also taught the sonnet and the stanza, and those musical studies which now entered into the system of education, and probably gave delicacy to our emotions, and euphony

to our language. The first attempts in the refinements of manners are unavoidably vitiated by too close a copy; and it is long before that becomes graceful which began in affectation. When the people experienced a ceaseless irritability, a marvelling curiosity to learn foreign adventures and to inspect strange objects, and "laid out ten doits to see a dead Indian," these were the nascent propensities which made Europe for them a common country, and indicated that insular genius which at a distant day was to add new dominions to the British Empire.

This public opinion which this sovereign was creating she watched with solicitude, not only at home, but even abroad. No book was put forth against her government, but we find her ministers selecting immediately the most learned heads or the most able writers to furnish the replies.* Burghley, we are told, had his emissaries to inform him of the ballads sung in the streets; and a curious anecdote at the close of the reign of Elizabeth informs us how anxiously she pondered on the manifestations of her people's feelings. The party of Lord Essex, on the afternoon before their insurrection, ordered the play of the tragical abdication of Richard the Second. It is one of the charges in their trial; and we learn, from a more secret quarter than the public trial, that the queen deeply felt the acting of this play at that moment as the watchword of the rebels, expressive of their designs. The queen's fears

* When Osorio published in Latin a bitter attack on Elizabeth and the English Church, Cecil employed Walter Haddon to answer it in Latin; and January, 1563, sent Haddon's book in a despatch to France, to our ambassador there, that it might be published where Osorio's had first come out. Lord Burghley sent the book of the Jesuit Sanders, whom Fuller calls Slanders, "De Visibili Monarchia," to the Archbishop of Canterbury to get answered. The archbishop, having found the right man, writes to Lord Burghley, that "he has honested him with a room in the Arches," until he had completed the work. A libellous tract, entitled "A Discovery of Treason," in 1573, reflecting severely on Elizabeth's ministers, was immediately answered by a royal proclamation; and so was the libel on Leicester by the Jesuit Parsons, and many others.

transformed her into Richard the Second; and a single step seemed to divide her throne from her grave. The recollection of this circumstance long haunted her spirits; for, a year and a half afterwards, in a literary conversation with the antiquary Lambarde, the subject of a portrait of Richard the Second occurring, the queen exclaimed, "I am Richard the Second, know ye not that?" The antiquary, at once wary and ingenuous, replied, well knowing that the virgin queen would shrink were her well-beloved Essex to be cast among ordinary rebels, "Such a wicked imagination was attempted by a most unkind gentleman, the most adorned creature that ever your majesty made." The queen replied, "He that will forget God will also forget his benefactors." So long afterwards was the royal Elizabeth still brooding over the gloomy recollection.

In the art of government, a new principle seemed to have arisen, — that of adopting and guiding public opinion, which, in the mutations of civil and political society, had emerged as from a chaos. A vacillating and impetuous monarch could not dare it: it was the work of a thoughtful sovereign, whose sex inspired a reign of love. Elizabeth not only lived in the hearts of her people, but survived in their memories: when she was no more, her birthday was long observed as a festival day; and so prompt was the remembrance of her deeds and her words, that, when Charles the First once published his royal speech, an insidious patriot sent forth "the Speech of Queen Elizabeth," which, being innocently printed by the king's printer, brought him into trouble. Our philosophic politician, Harrington, has a remarkable observation on the administration of Elizabeth, which, laying aside his peculiar views on monarchy and his theoretical balances in the State, we may partly adopt. He says, "If the government of Elizabeth be rightly weighed, it seems rather the exercise of a principality in a commonwealth than a sovereign power in a monarchy. Certain it is that she ruled wholly with an art

she had to high perfection, by humoring and blessing her people."

Did Harrington imagine that political resembles physical science? In the revelations of the Verulamian philosophy, it was a favorite axiom with its founder, that we subdue Nature by yielding tc her.

ORTHOGRAPHY AND ORTHOEPY.

Some of the first scholars of our country stepped out of the circle of their classical studies with the patriotic design of inculcating the possibility of creating a literary language. This was a generous effort in those who had already secured their supremacy by their skill and dexterity in the two languages consecrated by scholars. Many of the learned engaged in the ambitious reform of our *orthography*, then regulated by no certain laws; but, while each indulged in some scheme different from his predecessors, the language seemed only to be the more disguised amid such difficult improvements and fantastic inventions.

A curious instance of the monstrous anomalies of our orthography in the infancy of our literature, when a spelling-book was yet a precious thing which had no existence, appears in this letter of the Duchess of Norfolk to Cromwell, Earl of Essex: —

"*My ffary gode lord — her I sand you in tokyn hoff the neweyer a glasse hoff Setyl set in Sellfer gyld I pra you tak hit (in) wort An hy wer habel het showlde be bater I woll hit war wort a m crone.*"

These lines were written by one of the most accomplished ladies of the sixteenth century, "the friend of scholars and the patron of literature." Dr. Nott, who has supplied this literary curiosity, has modernized the passage word by word; and, though the idiom of the times is preserved, it no longer wears any appearance of vulgarity or of illiteracy.

"My very good lord, — Here I send you, in token of the New Year, a glass of setyll set in silver gilt: I pray you take it (in)

worth. An I were able, it should be better. I would it were worth a thousand crowns."

The domestic correspondence, as appears in letters of the times, seems to indicate that the writers imagined, that, by conferring larger dimensions on their words by the duplication of redundant consonants, they were augmenting the force, even of a monosyllable! *

In such disorder lay our orthography, that writers, however peculiar in their mode of spelling, did not even write the same words uniformly. Elizabeth herself wrote one word, which assuredly she had constantly in her mind, seven different ways; for thus has this queen written the word *sovereign*. The royal mistress of eight languages seemed at a loss which to choose for her command. The orthography of others eminent for their learning was as remarkable, and sometimes more cruditely whimsical, either in the attempt to retrace the etymology, or to modify exotic words to a native origin; or, finally, to suit the popular pronunciation. What system or method could be hoped for at a time when there prevailed a strange discrepancy in the very names of persons, so variously written not only by their friends, but by their owners? Lord Burleigh, when Secretary of State, daily signing despatches with the favorite *Leicester*, yet spelt his name *Lecester;* and Leicester himself has subscribed his own name eight different ways.†

At that period, down to a much later, every one seems to have been at a loss to write their own names. The name of *Villers* is spelt fourteen different ways in the deeds of that family. The simple dissyllabic but illustrious name of *Percy*,

* See "the Paston Letters," edited by Sir John Fenn; and Lodge's authentic and valuable Collection.

† George Chalmers's "Apology for the Believers in the Shakspeare Papers," 94. — See on this subject in "Curiosities of Literature," art. "Orthography of Proper Names." [Also a note on the orthography of Shakspeare's name, in an essay on that poet, in a future page of the present volume.]

the bishop found in family documents, they had contrived to write in fifteen different ways.

This unsettled state of our *orthography*, and, what it often depended on, our *orthoepy*, was an inconvenience detected even at a very early period. The learned Sir JOHN CHEKE, the most accomplished Greek scholar of the age, descended from correcting the Greek pronunciation to invent a system of English orthography. Cheke was no formal pedant: with an enlarged notion of the vernacular language, he aimed to restore the English of his day to what then he deemed to be its purity. He would allow of no words but such as were true English, or of Saxon original; admitting of no adoption of any foreign word into the English language, which at this early period our scholar deemed sufficiently copious. He objected to the English translation of the Bible, for its introduction of many foreign words; and, to prove them unnecessary, he retranslated the Gospel of St. Matthew, written on his own system of a new orthography. His ear was nice, and his Attic taste had the singular merit of giving concision to the perplexed periods of our early style. But his orthography deterred the eyes of his readers: however the learned Cheke was right in his abstract principle, it operated wrong when put in practice; for every newly-spelt word seemed to require a peculiar vocabulary.

When Secretaries of State were also men of literature, the learned Sir THOMAS SMITH, under Elizabeth, composed his treatise on "the English Commonwealth," both in Latin and in English, — the worthy companion of the great work of Fortescue. Not deterred by the fate of his friend, the learned Cheke, he projected even a bolder system, — to correct the writing of English words. He designed to relieve the ear from the clash of supernumerary consonants, and to liquefy by a vowelly confluence. But though the scholar exposed the absurdity of the general practice, where in certain words the redundant letters become mutes, or do not comprehend

the sounds which are expressed, while in other words we have no letters which can express the sounds by which they are spoken, he had only ascertained the disease; for he was not equally fortunate in the prevention. An enlargement of the alphabet, ten vowels instead of five, and a fantastical mixture of the Roman, the Greek, and the Saxon characters, required an Englishman to be a very learned man to read and write his maternal language. This project was only substituting for one difficulty another more strange.

Were we to course the wide fields which these early "rackers of orthography" have run over, we should start, at every turn, some strange "winged words;" but they would be fantastic monsters, neither birds with wings, nor hares with feet. Shakspeare sarcastically describes this numerous race: "Now he is turned ORTHOGRAPHER, his words are a very fantastical banquet; just so many strange dishes." Some may amuse. One affords a quaint definition of the combination of *orthoepy* with *orthography;* for he would teach "how to write or *paint the image of man's voice* like to the life or nature." * The most popular amender of our defective orthography was probably BULLOKAR; for his work at least was republished. He proposed a bold confusion,—to fix the fugitive sounds by recasting the whole alphabet, and enlarging its number from twenty-four to more letters, giving two sounds to one letter, to some three: at present no mark or difference shows how the sounded letters should be sounded, while our speech (or orthography) so widely differed; but the fault, says old Bullokar, is in the *picture*, that is, the letters, not the speech. His scheme would have turned the language into a sort of music-book, where the notes would have taught the tones.† I extract from his

* "An Orthographie, composed by J (ohn) H (art), Chester Herald," 1569. A book of extreme rarity. A copy at Horne Tooke's sale was sold for £6. 6*s*. It is in the British Museum.

† "Bullokar's Booke at large for the Amendment of Orthographie for English Speech," &c., &c., 1580, 4to; republished in 1586.

address to his country a curious passage. "In true orthographie, both the *eye*, the *voice*, and the *eare* must consent perfectly, without any let, doubt, or maze. Which want of concord in the eye, voice, and ear, I did perceive, almost thirtie yeares past, by the very voice of children, who, guided by the eye with the letter, and giving voice according to the name thereof, as they were taught to name letters, yielded the eare of the hearer a degree contrary sound to the word looked for: hereby grewe quarrels in the teacher, and lothsomeness in the learner, and great payne to both; and the conclusion was, that both teacher and learner must go by rote, or no rule could be followed, when, of 37 parts, 31 kept no square, nor true joint."

All these reformers, with many subsequent ones, only continued to disclose the uneasy state of the minds of the learned in respect to our inveterate orthography; so difficult was it, and so long did it take to teach the nation how to spell, — an art in which we have never perfectly succeeded. Even the learned Mulcaster, in his zealous labor to "the right writing of the English tongue," failed, though his principle seems one of the most obvious in simplicity. This scholar, a master of St. Paul's School, freed from collegiate prejudices, maintained that "words should be written as they were spoken." But where were we to seek for the standard of our orthoepy? Who was to furnish the model of our speech, in a land where the pronunciation varied from the court, the capital, or the county, and as mutable from age to age? The same effort was made among our neighbors. In 1570, the learned Joubert attempted to introduce a new orthography, without, however, the aid of strange characters. His rule was only to give those letters which yield the proper pronunciation: thus he wrote *œuvres*, uvres; *françoise*, fransaise; *temps*, tems.

Among the early reformers of our vernacular idiom, the name of Richard Mulcaster has hardly reached posterity. Our philologer has dignified a small volume, ostensibly com-

posed for "the training of children,"* by the elevated view he opened of far-distant times from his own of our vernacular literature; and he had the glory of having made this noble discovery when our literature was yet in its infancy.

This learned master of St. Paul's School develops the historical progress of language, on the great philosophical principle that no impediment existed to prevent the modern from rivalling the more perfect ancient languages. In opposition to the many, who contended that no subject can be philosophically treated in the maternal English, he maintained that no one language, naturally, is more refined than another, but is made so by the industry of "eloquent speech" in the writers themselves, and by the excellence of the matter: a native soil becomes more genial in emulating a foreign. I preserve the pleasing illustration of his argument in the purity of his own prose, and because he was the prophet of our literature.

"The people of Athens thus beautified their speech and enriched their tongue with all kinds of knowledge, both bred within Greece and borrowed from without. The people of Rome, having plotted [planned] their government much like the Athenians, became enamoured of their eloquence, and translated their learning wherewith they were in love. The Roman authority first planted the Latin among us here by force of their conquest: the use thereof for matters of learning doth cause it continue, though the conquest be expired. And therefore the learned tongues, so termed of their store, may thank their own people both for their fining [refinement] at home and their favor abroad. But did not these tongues use even the same means to brave [adorn] themselves, ere they proved so beautiful?

"There be two special considerations which keep the Latin and other learned tongues, though chiefly the Latin, in great countenance among us: the one is the knowledge which is

* "The first part of the Elementarie, which entreateth chiefliе of the *right writing of our English Tong*," 1582, 12mo.

registered in them; the other is the conference which the learned of Europe do commonly use by them, both in speaking and writing. We seek them for profit, and keep them for that conference; but whatever else may be done in our tongue, either to serve private use or the beautifying our speech, I do not see but it may well be admitted, *even though in the end it displaced the Latin*, as the Latin did others, and furnished itself by the Latin learning. For is it not indeed a marvellous bondage to become servants to one tongue, for learning sake, the most of our time, with loss of most time, whereas we may have the very same treasure in our own tongue, with the gain of most time? — our own bearing the joyful title of our liberty and freedom, the Latin tongue remembering us of our thraldom. I honor the Latin; but I worship the English. I wish all were in ours which they had from others; and, by their own precedent, do let us understand how boldly we may venture, notwithstanding the opinion of some of our people, as desire rather to please themselves with a foreign tongue wherewith they are acquainted, than to profit their country in her natural language, where their acquaintance should be. The tongues which we study were not the first getters, though by learned travel [labor] they prove good keepers; but they are ready to return and discharge their trust when it shall be demanded, in such a sort, as it was committed for term of years, and not for inheritance."

"But it is objected," our learned Mulcaster proceeds, with his engaging simplicity, that "the English tongue is of small reach, stretching no further than this island of ours; nay, not there over all. What tho' [then]? It reigneth there, though it go not beyond sea. And be not English folk finish [refined] as well as the foreign, I pray you? And why not our tongue for speaking, and our pen for writing, as well as our bodies for apparel, and our tastes for diet? But you say that we have no cunning [knowledge] proper to our soil to

cause foreigners to study it, as a treasure of such store. What tho' [then]? Why raise not the English wits, if they will bend their wills either, for matter or for method, in their own tongue, TO BE IN TIME AS WELL SOUGHT TO BY FOREIGN STUDENTS FOR INCREASE OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE, AS OUR SOIL IS SOUGHT TO AT THIS TIME BY FOREIGN MERCHANTS FOR INCREASE OF THEIR WEALTH?" *

We, who have lived to verify the prediction, should not less esteem the prophet: the pedagogue, MULCASTER, is a philosopher addressing men,—a genius who awakens a nation. His indeed was that "prophetic eye," which, amid the rudeness of its own days, in its clear vision contemplated on the futurity of the English language; and the day has arrived, when "*in the end it displaced the Latin*," and "FOREIGN STUDENTS" learn our language "FOR INCREASE OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE."

The design of Mulcaster to regulate orthography by orthoepy was revived so late as in 1701, in a curious work, under the title of "Practical Phonography," by John Jones, M.D. He proposed to write words as they are "fashionably" sounded. He notices "the constant complaints which were then rife in consequence of an unsettled orthography." He proclaims war against "the visible letters," which, not sounded, occasion a faulty pronunciation. I suspect we had not any spelling-books in 1701. I have seen Dyche's of 1710; but I do not recollect whether this was the first edition: this sage of practical orthography was compelled to submit to custom, and taught his scholars to read by the *ear*, and not by the *eye*. "Yet custom," he adds, "is not the truest way of speaking and writing, from not regarding the originals whence words are derived: hence abundance of errors have crept

* In this copious extract from Mulcaster's little volume, we have a specimen of the unadulterated simplicity of the English language. I have only modernized the orthography for the convenience of the reader; but I have not altered a single word.

both into the pronunciation and writing, and English is grown a medley in both these respects." Such was the lamentation of an honest pedagogue in 1710.

The "Phonography" of Dr. Jones was probably well received; for three years after, in 1704, he returned to his "spelling," which, he observed, "however mean, concerned the benefit of millions of persons." He had a notion to "invent a universal language to excel all others, if he thought that people would be induced to use it." *

Even the learned of our own times have indulged some of these philological reveries. One would hardly have suspected that Dr. FRANKLIN, whose genius was so wholly practical, contemplated to revolutionize the English alphabet: words were to be spelt by the sounds of their letters, which were to be regulated by six new characters, and certain changes in the vowels. He seems to have revived old Bullokar. PINKERTON has left us a ludicrous scheme of what he calls "an improved language." Our vowel terminations amount but to one-fourth of the language: all substantives closing in hard consonants were to have a final vowel, and the consonant was

* The second work of our phonographer is entitled "the New Art of Spelling, designed chiefly for Persons of Maturity; teaching them to Spell and Write Words by the Sound thereof, and to Sound and Read Words by the Sight thereof,—rightly, neatly, and fashionably, &c.," by J. Jones, M.D., 1704.

I give a specimen of his words as they are written and as they are pronounced:—

VISIBLE LETTERS.	CUSTOMARY AND FASHIONABLY.
Mayor	Mair
Worcester	Wooster
Dictionary	Dixnary
Bought	Baut.

"All words," he observes, "were originally written as sounded, and all which have since altered their sounds did it for ease and pleasure's sake from—

the harder to the easier
the harsher to the pleasanter } sound."
the longer to the shorter

to be omitted after the vowel. We were to acquire the Italian euphony by this presumed melody for our harsh terminations. In this disfigurement of the language, a *quack* would be a *quaco*, and *that* would be *tha*. Plurals were to terminate in *a; pens* would be *pena;* papers, *papera*. He has very innocently printed the entire "Vision of Mirza," from the "Spectator," on his own system: the ludicrous jargon at once annihilates itself. Not many years ago, JAMES ELPHINSTONE, a scholar, and a very injudicious one, performed an extraordinary experiment. He ventured to publish some volumes of a literary correspondence, on the plan of writing the words as they are pronounced. But this editor, being a Scotchman, had two sorts of Scotticisms to encounter, — in idiom and in sound. Notwithstanding the agreeable subjects of a literary correspondence, it is not probable that any one ever conquered a single perusal of pages, which tortured the eye, if they did not the understanding.

We may smile at these repeated attempts of the learned English, in their inventions of alphabets, to establish the correspondence of pronunciation with orthography, and at their vowelly conceits to melodize our orthoepy. All these, however, demonstrate that our language has never been written as it ought to have been. All our writers have experienced this inconvenience. Considerable changes in spelling were introduced at various periods, by way of experiment: this liberty was used by the Elizabethan writers for an improvement on the orthography of Gower and Chaucer. Since the days of Anne, we have further deviated; yet, after all our efforts, we are constrained to read words not as they are written, and to write different words with the same letters, which leaves them ambiguous. And, now, no reform shall ever happen, short of one by "the omnipotence of Parliament," which, the great luminary of law is pleased to affirm, "can do any thing except making a man a woman." Customary errors are more tolerable than the perplexing innovations of the

most perverse ingenuity.* The eye, bewildered in such uncouth pages as are here recorded, found the most capricious orthography in popular use always less perplexing than the attempt to write words according to their pronunciation, which every one regulated by the sounds familiar to his own ear, and usually to his own county. Even the dismemberment of words, omitting or changing letters, distracts attention;† and modern readers have often been deterred from the study of our early writers by their unsettled orthography. Our later literary antiquaries have, therefore, with equal taste and sagacity, modernized their text, by printing the words as the writers, were they now living, would have transcribed them.

Such have been the impracticable efforts to paint the voice to the eye, or to chain by syllables airy sounds. The imperfections for which such reforms were designed in great part still perplex us. Our written language still remains to the utter confusion of the eye and the ear of the baffled foreigner, who often discovers that what is written is not spoken, and what is spoken is not written. The orthography of some

* The Grammar prefixed to Johnson's Dictionary, curiously illustrated by the notes and researches of modern editors, will furnish specimens of many of these abortive attempts.

† When we began to drop the letter *k* in such words as *physic*, *music*, *public*, a literary antiquary, who wrote about 1790, observed on this new fashion, that, "forty years ago, no schoolboy had dared to have done this with impunity." These words in older English had even another superfluous letter; being spelt *physicke*, *musicke*, *publicke*. The modern mode, notwithstanding its prevalence, must be considered anomalous; for other words ending with the consonants *ck* have not been shorn of their final *k* We do not write *attac*, *ransac*, *bedec*, nor *bulloc*, nor *duc*, nor good *luc*.

The appearance of words deprived of their final letter, though identically the same in point of sound, produces a painful effect on the reader. Pegge furnishes a ludicrous instance. It consists of monosyllables, in which the final and redundant *k* is not written: "*Dic* gave *Jac* a *kic*, when *Jac* gave *Dic* a *knoc* on the *bac* with a *thic stic*." If even such familiar words and simple monosyllables can distract our attention, though they have only lost a single and mute letter, how greatly more in words compounded, disguised by the mutilation of several letters!

words leads to their false pronunciation. Hence originated that peculiar invention of our own, that odd-looking monster in philology, "a pronouncing dictionary," which offends our eyes by this unhappy attempt to write down sounds. They whose eyes have run over Sheridan, Walker, and other orthoepists, must often have smiled at their arbitrary disfigurements of the English language. These ludicrous attempts are, after all, inefficient; while they compel us to recollect, if the thing indeed be possible, a polysyllabic combination as barbarous as the language of the Cherokees.*

We may sympathize with the disconcerted foreigner who is a learner of the English language. All words ending in *ugh* must confound him: for instance, *though*, *through*, and *enough*, alike written, are each differently pronounced; and, should he give us *bough* rightly, he may be forgiven should he blunder at *cough:* if he escape in safety from *though*, the same wind will blow him out of *thought*. What can the foreigner hope when he discovers that good judges of their language pronounce words differently? A mere English scholar who holds little intercourse with society, however familiar in his closet be his acquaintance with the words, and even their derivations, might fail in a material point, when using them in conversation or in a public speech. A list of names of places and of persons might be given, in which not a single syllable is pronounced of those that stand written.

That a language should be written as it is spoken we see has been considered desirable by the most intelligent scholars. Some have laudably persevered in writing the past tense *red*, as a distinction from the present *read*, and anciently I have found it printed *redde*. Lord Byron has even retained the

* A most serious attempt was made a few years ago to establish English spelling by sound. A journal called the *Fonetic Nuz* (*sic*, to give the idea of the pronunciation of the word *News*) was published, and Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield" printed with a type expressly cast for the novel forms. The ruin of the projector closed the experiment. — Ed.

ancient mode in his Diary. By not distinguishing the tenses, an audible reader has often unwarily confused the times. *G* before *i*, ungrammatical orthoepists declare, is sounded hard; but so numerous are the exceptions, that the exceptions might equally be adopted for the rule. It is true that the pedantry of scholarship has put its sovereign veto against the practice of writing words as they are spoken, even could the orthoepy ever have been settled by an unquestioned standard. When it was proposed to omit the mute *b* in *doubt* and *debt*, it was objected, that, by this castration of a superfluous letter in the pronunciation, we should lose sight of their Latin original. The same circumstance occurred in the reform of the French orthography: it was objected to the innovators, that when they wrote *tems*, rejecting the *p* in *temps*, they wholly lost sight of the Latin original, *tempus*. Milton seems to have laid down certain principles of orthography, anxiously observed in his own editions printed when the poet was blind. An orthography which would be more natural to an unlearned reader is rejected by the etymologist, whose pride and pomp exult in tracing the legitimacy of words to their primitives, and delight to write them as near as may be according to the analogy of languages.

THE ANCIENT METRES IN MODERN VERSE.

A STRONG predilection to reproduce the ancient metres in their vernacular poetry was prevalent among the scholars of Europe; but, what is not less remarkable, the attempt everywhere terminated in the same utter rejection by the popular ear. What occasioned this general propensity of the learned, and this general antipathy in the unlearned?

These repeated attempts to restore the metrical system of the Greeks and the Romans would not only afford a classical ear, long exercised in the nice artifices of the ancient prosody, — a gratification entirely denied to the uninitiated; but, at bottom, there was a deeper design, — that of elevating an art which the scholar held to be degraded by the native but unlettered versifiers; and, as one of them honestly confessed, the true intent was to render the poetic art more difficult and less common. Had this metrical system been adopted, it would have established a privileged class. The thing was practicable; and, even in our own days, iambics and spondees, dactyls and tribrachs, charm a few classical ears by their torturous arrangement of words without rhythm and cadence.* Fortunately for all vernacular poetry, it was attempted too

* For a remarkable effusion of this ancient idolatry and classical superstition, see "Quarterly Review," August, 1834.

The ancient poetry of the Greeks was composed for recitation. The people never read; for they had no books: they listened to their rhapsodists; and their practised ear could decide on the artificial construction of verses regulated by *quantity*, and not by the latent delicacy and numerosity of which modern versification is susceptible.

late among the people of modern Europe ever to be substituted for their native melody, their rhythm, the variety of their cadences, or the consonance of rhyme.

With us the design of appropriating the ancient metres to our native verse was unquestionably borrowed from Italy, so long the model of our fashions and our literature. There it had early begun, but was neither admired nor imitated.* The nearly forgotten fantasy was again taken up by Claudio Tolommei, an eminent scholar, who composed an Italian poem with the Roman metres. More fortunate and profound than his neglected predecessors, Tolommei, in 1539, published his "*Versi e Regole della* POESIA NUOVA,"—the very term afterwards adopted by the English critics,—and promised hereafter to establish their propriety on principles deduced from philosophy and music. But, before this code of "new poetry" appeared, the practice had prevailed; for Tolommei illustrates "the rules" not only by his own verses, but by those of other writers, already seduced by this obsolete novelty. But what followed? Poets who hitherto had delighted by their euphony and their rhyme were now ridiculed for the dissonance which they had so laboriously struck out. A literary war ensued! The champions for "the new poetry" were remarkable for their stoical indifference amid the loud outcries which they had raised: something of contempt entered into their bravery, and it was some time before these obdurate poets capitulated.

In France, the same attempt encountered the same fate. A few scholars, Jodelle, Passerat, and others, had the intrepidity to versify in French with the ancient metres; and, what is perhaps not generally known, later, D'Urfé, Blaise de Vigneres, and others, adopted *blank verse;* for Balzac congratulates Chapelain in 1639 that "Les vers sans rime sont morts pour jamais." French poetry, which at that period could hardly sustain itself with rhyme, denuded of this slight

* Quadrio, "Storia e raggione d'ogni Poesia," i. 606.

dress, must have betrayed the squalidness of bare poverty. The "new poetry" in France, however, seems to have perplexed a learned critic; for with the learned his prejudices leaned in its favor, but as a faithful historian the truth flashed on his eyes. The French antiquary, Pasquier, stood in this awkward position, and on this subject has delivered his opinions with great curiosity and honest naïveté: "Since only these two nations, the Greeks and the Romans, have given currency to these measures without rhymes, and that on the contrary there is no nation in this universe which poetizes, who do not in their vulgar tongue use rhymes, which sounds have naturally insinuated themselves into the ear of every people for more than seven or eight centuries, even in Italy itself, I can readily believe that the ear is more delighted by our mode of poetry than with that of the Greeks and the Romans."*

The candor of the avowal exceeds the philosophy. Our venerable antiquary had greater reason in what he said than he was himself aware of; for rhyme was of a far more ancient date than his eight centuries.

It was in the Elizabethan period of our literature, that, in the wantonness of learned curiosity, our critics attempted these experiments on our prosody; and, on the pretence of "reformed verse," were for revolutionizing the whole of our metrical system.

The musical impression made by a period consisting of long and short syllables arranged in a certain order is what the Greeks called *rhythmus;* the Latins, *numerus;* and we, *melody*, or *measure*. But in our verse, simply governed by accent, and whose rhythm wholly depends on the poet's ear, those durations of time, or sounds, like notes in music, slow or quick, long or short, which form the quantities or the time of the measured feet of the ancients, were no longer perceptible

* Pasquier, "Les Recherches de la France," p. 624, fo. 1533.

as in the inflection, the inversion, and the polysyllabic variety, of the voluble languages of Greece and Rome. The artificial movements in the hexameter were inflicting, on the ear of the uninitiated, verse without melody; and, denuded of rhyme, seemed only a dislocated prose, in violation of the genius of the native idiom.

Several of our scholars, invested by classical authority, and carrying their fasces wreathed with roses, unhappily influenced several of our poets, among whom were Sidney and Spenser, in their youth subservient to the taste of their learned friend Gabriel Harvey, to submit their vernacular verse to the torturous Roman yoke. Had this project of versification become popular, it would necessarily have ended in a species of poetry, not referring so much to the natural ear affected by the melody of emotion, as to a mechanical and severe scansion. To this, Milton seems to allude in a sonnet to Lawes, the musician: —

> "Harry, whose tuneful and well-measured song
> First taught our English music how to span
> Words with just *note* and *accent*, not to scan
> *With Midas' ears, committing short and long.*"

The poet of all youthful poets had a narrow escape from "dark forgetfulness," when, from the uncouth Latin hexameters, his "Fairy Queen" took refuge in the melodious stanza of modern Italy. STANYHURST has left a memorable woful version of Virgil, and the pedantic GABRIEL HARVEY had espoused this Latin intruder among the English muses. The majestic march of the Latin resounding lines, disguised in the miserable English hexameters, quailed under the lash of the satirical TOM NASH, who scourged with searching humor. "The hexameter verse I grant to be a gentleman of an ancient house (so is many an English beggar); yet this clime of ours he cannot thrive in: our speech is too craggy for him to set his plough in; he goes twitching and hopping in our language like a man running upon quagmires, up the hill in

one syllable, and down the dale in another, retaining no part of that stately smooth gait which he vaunts himself with among the Greeks and Latins."

A treatise on "the New Poetry," or "the Reformed Verse," for it assumed this distinction, was expressly composed by WILLIAM WEBBE, recommendatory of this "reformation of our English verse."* Some years after, Dr. THOMAS CAMPION, accomplished in music and verse, a composer of airs, and a poet of graceful fancy in masks, fluent and airy in his rhymes, seating himself in the critic's chair, renewed the exotic system. Notwithstanding his own felicity in the lighter measures of English verse, he denounces "the vulgar and inartificial custom of RIMING, which hath, I know, deterred many excellent wits from the exercise of English poetry."† He calls it "the childish titillation of rime."

We may regret that Dr. Campion, who composed in Latin verse, held his English in little esteem, since he scattered them whenever he was called on, and not always even printed them. The physician, for such was Campion, held too cheap his honors as a poet and a musician: however, he was known in his days as "SWEET MASTER CAMPION," and his title would not be disputed in ours. In his dismissing his critical "Observations," he has prefixed a poem in what he calls "Licentiate Iambicks," which is our blank verse: it is a humorous address of an author to his little book, consisting only of nearly five leaves:—

> "Alas, poor book! I rue
> Thy rash selfe-love: go, spread thy papery wings;
> Thy lightness cannot helpe or hurt my fame."

* "A Discourse of English Poetrie, together with the Author's Judgment touching the Reformation of our English Verse," by WILLIAM WEBBE, graduate, 1586, 4to.

† "Observations on the Art of English Poesie, by THOMAS CAMPION; wherein is demonstratively proved, and by example confirmed, that the English tongue will receive eight several kinds of numbers proper to itself, which are all in this book set forth, and were never before this time by any man attempted," 1602.

The poet DANIEL replied by his "Defence of Rime;" an elaborate and elegant piece of criticism, to which no reply was sent forth by the anti-rhymers.

It has often been inquired, How came the vernacular rhyme to be wholly substituted for the classical metres, since the invaders of the Roman Empire everywhere adopted the language of Rome with their own? for, in the progress of their dominion, everywhere they found that cultivated language established. The victors submitted to the vanquished when the contest solely turned on their genius.

A natural circumstance will explain the occasion of this general rejection of the ancient metres. These artificial structures were operations too refined for the barbarian ear. Their bards, who probably could not read, had neither ability nor inclination to be initiated into an intricate system of metre, foreign to their ear, their tastes, and their habits, already in possession of supremacy in their own poetic art. Their modulation gave rhythm to their recitative, and their musical consonance in their terminable sounds aided their memory: these were all the arts they wanted; and, for the rest, they trusted to their own spontaneous emotions.

Rhyme then triumphed; and the degenerate Latinists themselves, to court the new masters of the world, polluted their Latin metres with the rhymes too long erroneously degraded as mere "Gothic barbarisms." Had the practice of the classical writers become a custom, we should now be "committing long and short;" and we should have missed the discovery of the new world of poetic melody, of which the Grecians and the Latins could never have imagined the existence

ORIGIN OF RHYME.

CONTENDING theories long divided the learned world. One party asserted that the use of rhyme was introduced by the Saracenic conquerors of Spain and of Sicily; for they had ascertained that the Arabian poets rhymed: the other, who had traced rhyme to a Northern source, among the Scandinavian bards, insisted that rhyme had a Gothic origin; and, as rhyme was generally used among the monks in the eighth century, they imagined, that, in the decline of ancient literature, the dexterous monks had borrowed the jingle for their church hymns, to win the ear of their Gothic lords. Both parties alike concurred in condemning rhyme as a puerile invention and a barbarous ornament, and of a comparatively modern invention.

The opinions of the learned are transmitted, till by length of time they are accepted as facts; and in this state was rhyme considered till our own days. Warton, in the course of his researches in the history of our poetry, was struck at the inaccuracy of one of these statements; for he had found that rhymed verse, both Latin and vernacular, had been practised much earlier than the period usually assigned. But Warton, though he thus far corrected the misstatements of his predecessors, advanced no further. No one, indeed, as yet, had pursued this intricate subject on the most direct principle of investigation: conjecture had freely supplied what prevalent opinion had already sanctioned; and we were long familiarized to the opprobrious epithet of "Monkish Rhymes." The subject was not only obscure, but apparently trivial; for Warton dismisses an incidental allusion to the origin of

rhyme by an apology for touching on it. "Enough," he exclaims in his impatience, "has been said on a subject of so little importance;" * and it is curious to observe, that the same vexatious exclamation occurred to a French literary antiquary. "We must not believe," said Lenglet du Fresnoy, "that we began to rhyme in France about 1250, as Petrarch pretends. The romance of Alexander existed before; and it is not probable that the first essay of our versification was a great poem. Abelard composed love-songs in the preceding century. I believe rhyme was still more ancient; and it is useless to torment ourselves to discover from whom we learned to rhyme. As we always had poets in our nation, so we have also had rhyme." † Thus two great poetical antiquaries in England and France had been baffled in their researches, and came to the same mortifying conclusion. They were little aware how an inquiry after the origin of rhyme could not be decided by chronology.

The origin of rhyme was an inquiry, which, however unimportant Warton in his despair might consider it, had, though inconclusively treated, often engaged the earnest inquiries of the learned in Italy and in Spain, in Germany and in France. It is remarkable that all the parties were equally perplexed in their researches, and baffled in their conclusions. Each inquirer seemed to trace the use of rhyme by his own people to a foreign source; for with no one it appeared of native growth. The Spaniard Juan de la Enzina, one of the fathers of the Spanish drama, and who composed an "Art of Poetry" (*Arte de Trovar*, as they expressively term the art of invention), fancied that rhyme had passed over into Spain from Italy; though in the land of redondillas, the guitar seemed attuned to the chant of their Moorish masters: but, in Italy, Petrarch,

* Warton's "Second Dissertation on the Introduction of Learning into England."

† Lenglet du Fresnoy: Preface to his edition of the "Roman de la Rose."

at the opening of his epistles, declares that they had drawn their use of rhyme from Sicily; and the Sicilians had settled that they had received it from the Provençals; while those roving children of fancy were confident that they had been taught their artless chimes by their former masters, the Arabians! Among the Germans, it was strenuously maintained that this modern adjunct to poetry derived its origin and use from the Northern scalds. Fauchet, the old Gaulish antiquary, was startled to find that rhyme had been practised by the primitive Hebrews!

Fauchet, struck by discovering the use of rhyme among this ancient people, and finding it practised by the monks in their masses in the eighth century, suggested for its modern prevalence two very dissimilar causes. With an equal devotional respect for "the people of God," and for the monks, whom he considered as sacred, he concluded that "possibly some pious Christian by the use of rhyme designed to imitate the holy people;" but, at the same time, holding, with the learned, rhyme to be a degenerate deviation from the classical metres of antiquity, he insinuates, "or perchance some vile poetaster, to eke out his deficient genius, amused the ear by terminating his lines with these ending unisons." He had further discovered, that the Greek critics had, among the figures of their rhetoric, mentioned the *homoioteleuton*, or consonance. The abundance of his knowledge contradicted every system which the perplexed literary antiquary could propose; and impatiently he concludes: "Rhyme has come to us from some part of the world, or nation, whoever it may be; for I confess I know not where to seek, nor what to conclude. It was current among the people and the languages which have arisen since the ruin of the Roman empire." *

* Much curious matter will be found in the rare volume of Fauchet's "Recueil de l'Origine de la Langue et Poesie Françoise Ryme et Romans plus les Noms et Summaire des Œuvres, de cxxvii. Poètes François, vivant avant l'an MCCC.;" liv. i. ch. vii., 1610, 4to.

Since the days of ancient Fauchet, no subsequent investigators, even such great recent literary historians as Warton, Quadrio, Crescembini and Gray, Tiraboschi, Sismondi and Ginguéné, have extricated us by their opposite theories from these uncertain opinions. It was reserved for the happy diligence of the learned Sharon Turner to explore into this abyss of darkness.* To defend the antiquity of the rhyming Welsh bards, he pursued his researches through all languages, and demonstrated its early existence in all. His researches enable us to advance one more step, and to effect an important result, which has always baffled the investigators of these curious topics.

Rhyming poems are found not only in the Hebrew, but in the Sanscrit, in the Bedas, and in the Chinese poetry,† as among the nations of Europe. It was not unknown to the Greeks, since they have named it as a rhetorical ornament; and it appears to have been practised by the Romans, not always from an accidental occurrence, but of deliberate choice.

To deduce the origin of rhyme from any particular people, or to fix it at any stated period, is a theory no longer tenable. The custom of rhyming has predominated in China, in Hindustan, in Ethiopia; it chimes in the Malay and Javanese poetry, as it did in ancient Judæa: this consonance trills in the simple carol of the African women; its echoes resounded in the halls of the frozen North, in the kiosk of the Persian, and in the tent of the Arab, from time immemorial. Rhyme must therefore be considered *as universal as poetry itself.*

Yet rhyme has been contemned as a "monkish jingle," or

* See "Two Inquiries respecting the Early Use of Rhyme," by Sharon Turner, Esq. — *Archæologia*, vol. xiv. The subject further enlarged, "On the Origin and Progress of Rhyme in the Middle Ages." — *Hist. of England*, iv. 386.

† The second book the Chinese children read is a collection conveyed in *rhyming lines.* — *Davis on the Chinese.*

a "Gothic barbarism;" but we see it was not peculiar to the monks nor the Goths, since it was prevalent in the vernacular poetry of all other nations save the two ancient ones of Greece and Rome. Delighting the ear of the man as it did that of the child, and equally attractive in the most polished as in the rudest state of society, rhyme could not have obtained this universality had not this concord of returning sounds a foundation in the human organization influencing the mind. We might as well inquire the origin of dancing as that of rhyming: the rudest society as well as the most polished practised these arts at every era. And thus it has happened, as we have seen, that the origin of rhyme was everywhere sought for, and everywhere found.

RHYMING DICTIONARIES.

If our poets in rhyme dared to disclose one of the grand mysteries of their art, they would confess, that to find rhymes for their lines is a difficulty, which, however overcome, after all has botched many a fine verse: the second line has often altered the original conception of the preceding one. The finest poems in the language, if critically examined, would show abundant evidence of this difficulty *not overcome.* This difficulty seems to have occurred to our earliest critics; for Gascoigne, in his "Certain Notes of Instruction concerning the making Verse or Rhyme in English," — and Webbe, in his "Discourse," repeats the precept, — would initiate the young poet in the art of rhyme-finding: the simplicity of the critic equals the depth of his artifice.

"When you have one verse *well settled* and *decently ordered*, which you may dispose at your pleasure to end it with *what word you will*, then, whatsoever the word is, you may speedily run over the other words which are answerable thereunto (for more readiness through all the letters alphabetically),* whereof you may choose that which will *best fit the sense* of your matter in that place; as, for example, if your last word end in book, you may straightway in your mind run them over thus, — book, cook, crook, hook, look, nook, pook, &c., &c. Now, it is *twenty to one but always one of these shall jump with your former word and matter in good sense.*"

* Here is the first idea of "A Dictionary of Rhymes," which has inspired so many unhappy bards.

The poet in *rhyme* has therefore in his favor "twenty to one" of a chance that his second line may "jump" with his former one. We were not aware that the odds were so favorable, even when we look over the finished poetry of Pope, who has written so much; or of Gray, who has written so little. Boileau tells us he always chose a rhyme for his second line before he wrote out his first, that by this means he might secure the integrity of the sense; and this he called "the difficult art of rhyming." These are mysteries which only confirm the hazard which rhymers incur; and on the whole, though we do marvellously escape, the poet at every rhyming line still stands in peril.

This torture of rhyme-finding seems to have occasioned a general affliction among modern poets; and an unhappy substitute was early found in arranging collections of rhymes, and which subsequently led to a monstrous device. In Goujet's "Bibliothèque Française," vol. iii., will be found a catalogue of these rhyming dictionaries: the earliest of the French was published in 1572. Indeed, some of these French critics looked upon these rhyming dictionaries as part of the art of poetry; recommending pocket editions for those who in their walks were apt to poetize, as if finding a rhyme would prompt a thought.

Among these early attempts is an extravagant one by Paul Boyer. It is a kind of encyclopædia, in which all the names are arranged by their terminations, so that it furnishes a dictionary of rhymes.

The demand for rhymes seems to have continued; for, in 1660, D'Ablancourt Fremont published a *Dictionnaire*, which was enlarged by Richelet in 1667. It seems we were not idle in threading rhymes in our own country; for Poole, in 1657, in his "Parnassus," furnishes a collection of rhymes; and he has had his followers. But the perfect absurdity or curiosity of a rhyming lexicographer appears in one of Walker's Dictionaries of the English Language. As he

was a skilful philologist, he has contrived to make it useful for orthography and pronunciation. He advances it as on a plan "not hitherto attempted;" and his volume, on the whole, as Moreri observes of Boyer's, is a thing "*plaisant à considérer.*"

A dictionary of rhymes is as miserable a contrivance to assist a verse as counting the syllables by the finger is to regulate the measure: in the case of rhyme, it is sense which should regulate the verse; and in that of metre, it is the ear alone which can give it melody.

THE ARTE OF ENGLISH POESIE.

AMONG the arts of English poesie, the most ample and most curious is an anonymous work.* The history of an anonymous book is sometimes liable to the most contradictory evidence. The present, first printed in 1589, we learn from the work itself, was in hand as early as in 1553. The author inscribed the volume to Queen Elizabeth; and the courtly critic has often adroitly addressed "the most beautiful, or rather the beauty, of queens;" and, to illustrate that figure which he terms "the gorgeous," has preserved for us some of her regal verses.

Yet, notwithstanding this votive gift to royalty, the printer has formally dedicated the volume to Lord Burleigh; acknowledging that "this book came into my hands with *its bare title, without any author's name.*" The author himself could not have been at all concerned in delivering this work to the press; for, having addressed the volume to the queen, he would never have sought for a patron in the minister.

This ambiguous author remained unknown after the publication; for Sir John Harrington, who lived in the circle of the court, designates him as "the unknown *godfather*, that, this last year save one (1589), set forth a book called 'the Arte of English Poesie.'" About twelve years afterwards, Carew, in his "Survey of Cornwall," appears to have been the first who disclosed the writer's name as "Master Puttenham;"

* "The Arte of English Poesie, contrived in three bookes,—the first of Poets and Poesie, the second of Proportion, the third of Ornament," 1589,

but this was so little known among literary men, that three years later, in 1605, Camden only alludes to the writer as "the *gentleman* who proves that poets are the first politicians, the first philosophers, and the first historiographers." Eleven years after, Edmund Bolton, in his "Hypercritica," notices "this work (*as the fame is*) of one of Queen Elizabeth's pensioners, Puttenham." The qualifying parenthesis, "as the fame is," leaves the whole evidence in a very ticklish condition.

Who was Puttenham? A name unknown, and whose writings are unnoticed by any contemporary. Even the baptismal name of this writer has been subject to contradiction.*

In the work itself, the writer has interspersed many allusions to himself, from his nursery to his court-days. His nurse, a right-lined ancestor of the garrulous nurse of the

* Ames appears first to have called him *Webster* Puttenham. Possibly Ames might have noted down the name from Carew, as Master Puttenham; which by an error of the pen, or the printer, was transformed into the remarkable Christian name of *Webster*. I cannot otherwise account for this misnomer. Steevens, in an indistinct reference to a manuscript, revealed it to be *George;* and probably was led to that opinion by the knowledge of a manuscript work in the Harleian Collection by a George Puttenham. It is a defence of Elizabeth in the matter of the Scottish queen. Ellis, our poetic antiquary, has distinguished our author as "Webster, *alias* George." All this taken for granted, the last editor, probably in the course of his professional pursuits, falls on a nuncupative will, dated 1590, of a *George* Puttenham: already persuaded that such a name appertained to the author of the "Art of English Poetry," he ventured to corroborate what yet remained to be ascertained. All that he could draw from the nuncupative will of this *George* Puttenham is, that he "left all his goods, movable and immovable, moneys and bonds," to Mary Symes, a favorite female servant; but he infers that "he probably was our author." Yet, at the same time, there turned up another will of one *Richard* Puttenham, "a prisoner in her Majesty's Bench." *Richard*, therefore, may have as valid pretensions to "the Arte of English Poesie" as *George*, and neither may be the author. This matter is trivial, and hardly worth an inquiry.

Haslewood, laborious, but unfortunately uneducated, is the editor of an elegant reprint of this "Arte of English Poesie." A modern reader may therefore find an easy access to a valuable volume which had been long locked up in the antiquary's closet.

Capulets, had exercised his prurient faculties in expounding an indecent riddle,* which our mature critic still deemed "pretty;" but, according to one of his rhetorical technical terms, "it holds too much of the *cachemphaton* or *foule speech*, and may be drawn unto a reprobate sense." Our author was a travelled gentleman, and, by his residence at various courts, seems to have been connected with the *corps diplomatique;* for he had been present on some remarkable occasions at foreign courts, which we discover by coeval anecdotes of persons and places. One passage relating to himself requires attention. Alluding to the polished hypocrisy practised in courts, he observes, "These and many such like disgustings we find in men's behavior, and specially in the courtiers of foreign countries, *where in my youth I was brought up*, and very well observed their manner of life and conversation; for of *mine own country I have not made so great experience.*"

This seems as ambiguous as any part of our author's history; for, at eighteen years of age, he had addressed Edward the Sixth by "Our Eclogue of Elpine." When he tells us that "he had not had so great experience of his own country as of others," we may be surprised; for no contemporary writer has displayed such intimacy with the court anecdotes of England, which have studded many of his pages. Neither does the style, which bears no mark of foreign idiom, nor the collected matter of his art of poetry, which discovers a minute acquaintance with every species of English composition, preserving for us much fragmentary poetry, at all betray a stranger's absence from home. But, what seems more extraordinary, the writer frequently alludes to learned disquisitions, critical treatises, and to dramatic compositions, of his own, — to "our comedy" and to "our enterlude;" and has frequent illustrations drawn from poems of all sorts and measures of his own growth. It is one of the singularities of this unknown

* See page 157 of "the Arte of English Poesie."

person, that his writings were numerous, and that no contemporary has ever mentioned the name of Puttenham. How are we to reconcile these discrepancies, and how account for these numberless vernacular compositions, with the condition of one who was "brought up abroad," and who had such "little experience of his own country"? We appear to read a work composed by different persons.

The same anomalous character is attached to the work as we have discovered concerning the writer.

This "Arte of English Poesie," which Warton observes "remained long as a rule of criticism," and still may be consulted for its comprehensive system, its variety of poetic topics, and its contemporary historical anecdotes, is the work of a scholar, and evidently of a courtier. His scholastic learning furnished the terms of his numerous figures of rhetoric, each of which is illustrated by examples drawn from English literature; but aware that this uncouth nomenclature might deter, as he says, "the sort of readers to whom I write, too scholastical for our MAKERS," as he classically calls our poets, "and more fit for clerks than for courtiers, for whose instruction this travail is taken," our logician was cast into the dilemma of inventing English descriptions for these Greek rhetorical figures. We had no English name: "the rule might be set down; but there was no convenient name to hold it in memory."

To familiarize the technical terms of rhetoric by substituting English descriptive ones led to a ludicrous result. The Greek term of *histeron proteron* was baptized the *preposterous:* these are words misplaced, or, as our writer calls it, "in English proverb, the cart before the horse;" as one, describing his landing on a strange coast, said thus *preposterously;* that is, placing before what should follow: —

"When we had climbed the cliff, and were ashore;" —

instead of —

"When we had come ashore, and climbed the cliff."

The *hypallage* he calls *the changeling*, when changing the place of words changes the sense; as in the phrase, "Come, dine with me, and stay not," turned into "Come, stay with me, and dine not." This change of sense into nonsense he called "the changeling," in allusion to the nursery legend, when fairies steal the fairest child, and substitute an ill-favored one. This at least is a most fanciful account of nonsense! I will give the technical terms of satire: they display a refinement of conception which we hardly expected from the native effusions of the wits of that day. *Ironia* he calls the *dry-mock; sarcasmus*, the *bitter taunt;* the Greek term *asteismus* he calls *the merry scoff*, — it is the jest which offends not the hearer. When we mock scornfully comes the *micterismus*, the *fleering frumpe;* as he who said to one to whom he gave no credit, "*No doubt, sir, of that!*" The *antiphrasis*, or the *broad flout*, when we deride by flat contradiction, antithetically calling a dwarf a giant; or addressing a black woman, "In sooth, ye are a fair one!" The *charientismus* is *the privy nippe*, when you mock a man in a *sotto voce;* and the *hyperbole*, as the Greeks term the figure, and the Latins *dementiens*, our vernacular critic, for its immoderate excess, describes as "the over-reacher, or the loud liar." The rhetorical figures of our critic exceed a hundred in number, if Octavius Gilchrist has counted rightly; all which are ingeniously illustrated by fragments of our own literature, and often by poetical and historical anecdotes by no means common and stale. We must appreciate this treasure of our own antiquity; though we may smile when we learn, that while we speak or write, however naturally, we are in fact violating or illustrating this heap of rhetorical figures; without whose aid, unconsciously our *fleering frumpes*, our *merry scoffs*, and our *privy nippes*, have been intelligible all our days.

In the more elevated spirit of this work, the writer opens by defining the poet, after the Greek, to be "a maker" or creator, drawing the verse and the matter from his native

invention, — unlike the *translator*, who therefore may be said to be a versifier, and not a poet. This canon of criticism might have been secure from the malignity of hypercriticism. It happened, however, that, in the year following that in which "the Art of Poetry" was published, Sir John Harrington put forth his translation of Ariosto; and, presuming that none but a poet could translate a poet, he caught fire at the solemn exclusion. The vindictive "versifier" invented a merciless annihilation both of the critic and his "Art," by very unfair means; for he proved that the critic himself was a most detestable poet, and consequently the very existence of "the Art" itself was a nullity! "All the receipts of poetry prescribed," proceeds the enraged translator of Ariosto, "I learn out of this very book, never breed excellent poets. For, though the poor gentleman laboreth to make poetry an art, he proveth nothing more plainly than that it is a *gift*, and not an *art;* because making himself and many others so cunning in the art, yet he showeth himself so slender a gift in it."

Was this critic qualified by nature and art to arbitrate on the destinies of the Muses? Were his taste and sensibility commensurate with that learning which dictated with authority, and that ingenuity which reared into a system the diversified materials of his critical fabric? We hesitate to allow the claims of a critic whose trivial taste values "the courtly trifles," which he calls "pretty devices," among the inventions of poesy; we are startled by his elaborate exhibition of "geometrical figures in verse;" his delight in egg or oval poems, tapering at the ends, and round in the middle; and his columnar verse, whose pillars, shaft, and capital can be equally read upwards and downwards. This critic, too, has betrayed his utter penury of invention in "parcels of his own poetry," obscure conceits in barbarous rhymes; by his intolerable "triumphals," poetical speeches for recitation; and a series of what he calls "partheniades, or new-year's gifts,"—bloated eruptions of those hyperbolical adulations which the maiden

queen could endure, but which bear the traces of the poet-aster holding some appointment at court.

When the verse flowed beyond the mechanism of his rule of scanning, and the true touch of nature beyond the sympathy of his own emotions, the rhetorician showed the ear of Midas. He condemns the following lines as "going like a minstrel's music in a metre of eleven, very harshly in my ear, whether it be for lack of good rime or of good reason, or of both, I wot not;" and he exemplifies this lack of "good rime and good reason, or both," by this exquisitely tender apostrophe of a mother to her infant: —

> "Now suck, child, and sleep, child, thy mother's own joy,
> Her only sweet comfort to drown all annoy;
> For beauty, surpassing the azured sky,
> I love thee, my darling, as ball of mine eye."

Such a stanza, indeed, may disappoint the reader, when he finds that we are left without any more.

In the history of this ambiguous book, and its anonymous author, I discover so many discrepancies and singularities, such elaborate poetical erudition, combined with such ineptitude of poetic taste, that I am inclined to think that the more excellent parts could never have been composed by the courtly trifler. It is remarkable that this curious "Art of English Poetry" was ascribed to SIDNEY; and Wanley, in his catalogue of the Harley Library, assigns this volume to Spenser.* I lay no stress on the singular expression of Sir John Harring-

* The following letter is an evidence of the uncertain accounts respecting this author among the most knowing literary historians. Here, too, we find that Webster or George or Richard is changed into Jo.! —

"What authority Mr. Wood has for Jo. Puttenham's being the author of the 'Art of English Poetry,' I do not know. Mr. Wanley, in his 'Catalogue of the Harley Library,' says that *he had been told that Edmund Spenser was the author of that book, which came out anonymous.* But Sir John Harrington, in his preface to 'Orlando Furioso,' gives so hard a censure of that book, that Spenser could not possibly be the author." — *Letter from Thomas Baker to the Hon. James West*, printed in the "European Magazine," April, 1788.

ton, applied to the present writer, as "the unknown *godfather*;" which seems to indicate that the presumed writer had named an offspring, without being the parent. Nor will I venture to suggest that this work may at all have been connected with that treatise of "the English poets," which Spenser, we know, had lost, and never recovered. The poet lived ten years after the present publication, and it does not appear that he ever claimed this work. Manuscripts, however, we may observe, strangely wandered about the world in that day; and such literary foundlings often fell into the hands of the charitable. In that day of modest publication, some were not always solicitous to claim their own; and there are even instances of the original author, residing at a distance from the metropolis, who did not always discover that his own work had long passed through the press; so narrow then was the sphere of publication, and so partial was all literary communication.

One more mystery is involved in the authorship of this remarkable work: first printed in 1589, we gather from the book itself that it was in hand at least as early as in 1553. This glorious retention of a work during nearly forty years would be a literary virtue with which we cannot honor the trifler who complacently alludes to so many of his own writings which no one else has noticed, and, unluckily for himself, has furnished for us so many "parcels of his poetry" to exemplify "the art."

If we resolve the enigma by acknowledging that this learned and curious writer has not been the only critic who has proved himself to be the most woful of poetasters, this decision will not account for the mysterious silence of the writer in allowing an elaborate volume, the work of a great portion of a life, to be cast out into the world unnamed and unowned.

I find it less difficult to imagine that some stray manuscript, possibly from the relics of SIDNEY, or perhaps the lost one of SPENSER, might have fallen into the hands of some courtly

critic, or "the Gentleman Pensioner," who inlaid it with many of his own trivialities: the discrepancy in the ingenuity of the writing with the genius of the writer in this combination of learning and ineptitude would thus be accounted for; at present, it may well provoke our scepticism.

THE DISCOVERIE OF WITCHCRAFT.

A SINGLE volume sent forth from the privacy of a retired student, by its silent influence may mark an epoch in the history of the human mind among a people.

Such a volume was "the Discoverie of Witchcraft, by Reginald Scot;" a singular work, which may justly claim the honor in this country of opening that glorious career which is dear to humanity, and fatal to imposture.

Witchcraft and magic, and some similar subjects, through a countless succession of ages, consigned the human intellect to darkness and to chains. In this country, these conspiracies against mankind were made venerable by our laws, and consecrated by erring piety. They were long the artifices of malignant factions, who found it mutually convenient to destroy each other by the condemnation of crimes which could never be either proved or disproved. The sorcerers and witches under the Church of Rome were usually the heretics; and our Henry the Eighth, who was a Protestant pope, transferred the grasp of power to the civil law, and an Act of Parliament of the Reformation made witchcraft felony. Dr. Bulleyn, a celebrated physician and a reformer, who lived through the gloomy reign of Philip and Mary, bitterly laments, "that, while so many blessed men are burned, witches should walk at large." When the Act fell into disuse, Elizabeth was reminded, by petitions from the laity and by preaching from the clergy, that "witches and sorcerers were wonderfully increasing, and that her majesty's subjects pined away until death." Witchcraft was again confirmed to be felony.

The learned and others were fostering the traditions of the people about spirits, the incubus and the succubus, the assemblies of witches, and the sabbaths of Satan. Some constructed their theories to explain the inexplicable; and too many, by torture, extorted their presumed facts and delusive confessions. The sage doated; the legal functionaries were only sanguinary executioners; and the merciful, with the kindest intentions, were practising every sort of cruelty by what was termed trials to save the accused. The history of these dismal follies belongs even to a late period of the civilization of Christian Europe! An enlightened physician of Germany had raised his voice in defence of the victims who were suffering under the imputation of sorcery:* not denying the satanic potency, he maintained that the Devil was very well able to execute his own malignant purposes, without the aid of such miserable agents. It required a protracted century ere Balthaser Bekker's "World Bewitched" could deprive Satan himself of his personality; indeed, of his very existence. But it was a subject to be tenderly touched: superstition was a sacred thing, and too often riveted with theology; and, though the learned Wierus had thus guarded his system, to a distant day he encountered the polemical divines. One of his fiercest assailants was a layman, the learned Bodin: he who has composed so admirable a treatise on Government, now deeply plunged into the "Demonomanie des Sorciers." The volume of Wierus, he tells us, "made his hair stand on end." "Shall we," he cries, "credit a little physician" before all the philosophers of the world, and the laws of God which condemn sorcerers?

While Wierus and Bodin had been thus employed, an Englishman, Reginald Scot, in the serene retreat of a studious life, was silently laboring on the development of this great moral conquest over the prejudices of Europe. Reginald

* "De Prestigiis Demonum et Incantationibus ac Veneficiis," 1564.

Scot, who passed his life in the occupation of his studies, seems to have concentrated them on this great subject; for he has left no other work, except an esteemed tract on the cultivation of the hop,—the vine of his Kentish county. Although he took no degree at college, his erudition was not the less extensive, as appears by his critical knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek. But it was chiefly by his miscellaneous reading, where nothing seems to have escaped his insatiable curiosity on the extraordinary subjects which he ventured to scrutinize with such minute attention, that he was enabled to complete one of the most curious investigations of the age. Anthony Wood, in his peculiar style, tells us that "Scot gave himself up solely to *solid reading*, and to the perusal of *obscure authors* that had by the generality of the learned been neglected." This is a curious description of the early state of our vernacular literature, and of those students, who, watchful over the spirit of the times, sought a familiar acquaintance with the opinions of their contemporaries. All writers were condemned as "obscure" who stood out of the pale of classical antiquity; and plain Anthony, who rarely dipped into the writings of Greece and Rome, but was an incessant lover of the miscellaneous writers of modern date, distinguishes his favorites as "solid reading." In the days of Reginald Scot, our scholars never ventured to quote other authority than some ancient; but the poets from Homer to Ovid, the historians from Tacitus to Valerius Maximus, and the essayists from Plutarch to Aulus Gellius, could not always supply arguments and knowledge for an age and on topics which had nothing in common with their own.

With more elevated views than Wierus, Scot denied the power of sorcerers, because it attributed to them an omnipotence which can only be the attribute of divine power. Our philosopher could publish only half the truth. "My question is not, as many fondly suppose, whether there be witches or not, but whether they can do such miraculous works as are

imputed unto them." He thus adroitly eludes an argument which the public mind was not yet capable of comprehending. The "Discoverer" had to encounter a fierce host in shaking the predominant creed. The passions of mankind were enlisted against the zealous antagonist of an ancient European prejudice: the vital interests of priestly exorcists were at stake. To doubt of a supernatural agency, seemed, to some, to be casting a suspicion over miracles and mysteries. The most ticklish point was the difficulty of explaining scriptural phrases, which Reginald Scot denied related to witches, in the ordinary sense attached to these miserable women; the Hebrew term merely designating a female who practised the arts of "a poisoner" or "a cozener or cheat." The whole scene of the witch of Endor seems to have racked the "Discoverer's" invention through several chapters, to unveil the preparatory management of such incantations by the ventriloquizing Pythonissa, and her confederate, some lusty priest. All these, Scot presumes to trace in the obscure and interrupted narrative of the Israelitish Macbeth, who, in his despair, hastened by night to listen to his approaching fate, which hardly required the gift of prophecy to predict.

Our "Discoverer" prepared his readers for a revolution in their opinions. It appears that in his day, notwithstanding some fairies still lurking in the by-corners of our poets, the whole fairy creed had in fact passed away. He appeals to this native mythology, now utterly exploded, as an evidence of popular infatuation; and our philosopher observes, that he cannot hope that the partial reader should look with impartial eyes on this book: it were labor lost to ask for this; for, he adds, "I should no more prevail therein than if *a hundred years since I should have entreated your predecessors* to believe that Robin Goodfellow, that great but antient bull-beggar, had been but a cousening merchant, and no devil indeed." This was a philosophical parallelism; and the corollary pinched the present generation concerning their witches,—

they who were now holding their fathers dotards for their belief in fairies.

The volume abounds with many strange incidents, which its singular subject involved. The solitary witch of the homestead was not the poetic witch uttering her incantations at her mystic caldron. Her homely feats are familiar; but the revelations of the impostures are not. "The devils and spirits," the powers of the kingdom of darkness, are more fantastic. These raw materials have been woven in the rich looms of Shakspeare and Goethe. Our author included in his volume a complete treatise of legerdemain, or the conjuring art. To convince the people that many acts may appear miraculous without the intervention of a miracle, he ingeniously initiated himself into the deceptious practices of the juggler; but he dreaded lest the spectators of his dexterity should depose against his own witchcraft, and "the familiar," his confederate. Our seer, to save himself from fire or water, has not only minutely explained these "deceitful arts," but cautiously accompanied them by woodcuts of the magical instruments used on these occasions. At the time, these were surprising revelations. The sagacity of our author anticipated the fate of his work. It appears to have shaken the credulity of a very few reflecting magistrates; yet such scholars as Sir Thomas Smith, the great political writer, when he retired from public life, as a justice of peace, was active in punishing witches. But the book was denounced by the divines.

When Reginald Scot's work was translated into Dutch, we learn from an arch-enemy of philosophy, the intolerant Calvinistical polemic, Voetius, that "this book was an inexhaustible source, whence not a few learned and unlearned persons in the Netherlands have begun to doubt, and grow sceptics and libertines with regard to witchcraft. Our country is infected with libertines and half-libertines; and they have proceeded to such a pitch of ignorance, that this set of new Sadducees laugh at all the operations and apparitions of the

devils as phantoms and fables of old women, and timorous superstition." The work was more successful abroad than at home; and, indeed, how often have the benefactors of mankind experienced that the voice of foreigners is the voice of posterity! They decide without prepossessions.

The FIRST edition of the "Discoverie of Witchcraft," 1584, is of extreme rarity, the copies having been burned by the order of James, on his accession to the English throne, in compliance with the act of Parliament of 1603, which ratified a belief in witchcraft throughout the three kingdoms; but the author had not survived to see that day. This awful prejudice broke out afresh under the fanatical government, and gave rise to an infamous class of men who were called "witch-finders." When a reward was publicly offered, there seemed to be no end in finding witches. It was probably this great evil which reminded the people of Scot, whose work was reprinted in 1651; but the public so eagerly required another edition, that it was again republished in 1665. The fact was, that justices, judges, and juries had so little improved by the *second* edition, that many had kept with great care their note-books of "Examinations of Witches," and were discovering "hellish knots of them." It was only in the preceding year that Sir Matthew Hale had left for execution two female victims, without even summing up the evidence; solely resting on the fact, that "there were witches;" for which assumption he appealed "to the Scriptures," and, he added, to "the wisdom of all nations"! What is not less remarkable in this trial, the illustrious corrector of "vulgar errors," Sir Thomas Browne, in his medical character examining the accused person, who was liable to fainting fits, acknowledged that the fits were natural and common; but the philosopher was so prepossessed that the woman was a witch, that he pronounced against her, alleging this mystical explanation of "the subtleties of the Devil," who had taken this opportunity of her natural fits to be "co-operating with her malice"

What a demonstration, that superstition holds its mastery even over the philosophic intellect!

The popular prejudice was confirmed by narratives of witchcraft, by Joseph Glanvil, one of the early founders of the Royal Society; by the visionary learning of the Platonic Dr. More; and by the theological dogmatism of Meric Casaubon. Dr. More was desirous that every parish should keep a register of all authentic histories of apparitions and witchcraft: and Glanvil was so stanch a believer, that he considered that the strong unbelief in some persons was an evidence of what they denied; for that so confident an opinion could not be held but by some kind of witchcraft and fascination in the senses. All these, and such as these, treat with extreme contempt and cover with obloquy "the Father of the modern Witch-advocates," "the Gallant of the Old Hags!" This was our Reginald Scot.

The most elaborate treatise on the subject was now sent forth by John Webster,—"the Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft," 1677, fol. He defends Scot and Wierus against Glanvil and Casaubon. He was a clergyman, and dares not agitate the question, *an sint*, whether there be witches or not; but *quomodo sint*, in what manner they act, and what the things are they do, or can perform. The state of the question is not simply the being of witches, or *de existencia*, but only *de modo existendi*. The dispute of their manner of existing necessarily supposes their existence. He has, however, detected many singular impostures, and the volume is full and curious.*

* Webster notices the popular delusions of the country people in the following passage, in which he is speaking of a sound judgment as necessary to a competent witness: "They ought to be of a sound judgment, and not of a vitiated and distempered phantasie nor of a melancholic constitution, for these will take a bush to be a bugbear, and a black sheep to be a demon; the noise of the wild swans flying high in the night, to be spirits,—or, as they call them here in the north, *Gabriel Ratchets;* the calling of a daker hen in the meadow, to be the *whistlers;* the howling of the female fox in a

Glanvil and his "Sadducismus Triumphatus, or full Evidence concerning Witches," 1668, — a book so popular that I have never met with a very fair copy, — introduced with plenary evidence a minute narrative of "the Demon of Tedworth," whose invisible drum beat every night, for above a year, in the house of some reverend magistrate, who had evidently raised a spirit which he could not lay, and whose Puck-like pranks wofully deranged the whole unsuspicious family. This tale, confirmed by affidavits, but shaken by demurrers, was long an article of faith, but finished by furnishing the comedy of Addison's "Drummer." The controversy about witches, including that of ghosts, which were equally the incessant but volatile phantoms of their chase, now assumed a more serious aspect than ever. The illustrious Boyle, who had observed the unguarded heat with which it was pursued, vainly cautioned the parties, that even religion might suffer by weak arguments drawn from uncertain statements. Boyle had more reason to say this than one might suppose; for Dr. More, ever too vehement and too fanciful, had exclaimed in his unhappy conviction, "No bishop, no king! no spirit, no God!" *

gill or clough for the male, to be the cry of fairies." "The *Gabriel Ratchets*," in our author's time, seem to have been the same with the German *Rachtvogel*, or *Rachtraven*. The word and the superstition are well known in Lancashire, though in a sense somewhat different; for the *Gable-Rachets* are supposed to be something like litters of puppies yelping (gabbling) in the air. *Ratch* is certainly a dog in general.

The *whistlers* are the green or whistling plovers, which fly very high in the night, uttering their characteristic note. — *Whitaker's History of Whalley.*

* In a correspondence I have read between Dr. More and one of his enthusiastic disciples, the Rev. Edmund Elys, the letters usually turn on the reality of apparitions and magical incantations. Both these learned men were hunting about all their lifetimes to find a true ghost. Elys often breaks out in triumph that he has at length discovered an authentic ghost: in subsequent letters, the evidence gradually diminishes; and finally the apparition and evidence vanish together. The following pious doubts, addressed to the philosophic More, may amuse the reader: —

Shadwell, in his "Lancashire Witches," resolved to advance nothing without authority, accompanies that comedy with ample notes, drawn from the writings of witch-believers. His witches, therefore, are far beneath those of Shakspeare; for they do nothing but what we are told witches do: the whole system of witchery is here exhibited. In his remarkable preface, Shadwell tells us, that, if he had not represented them as *real* witches, "it would have been called atheistical by a prevailing party."

The belief in witchcraft was maintained chiefly by that fatal error which had connected the rejection of any supernatural agency in old women with religious scepticism; and it was fostered by the statutes, which with the lawyer admitted of no doubt. "We cannot doubt of the existence of

"Most honored dear Sir,—I should be troublesome to you if I did not repress many strong inclinations to write to you; for I do not take greater comfort in any thing than in the thoughts of *you*, and the *notions* you have communicated to the world.

"I now entreat you to tell me one of your arguments why this act is unlawful: viz., to inquire by this black art (as I am sure it is, though I am told some preachers allow it) whether such or such a *suspected person* has stolen a thing; viz., by putting a key into the midst of a Bible, and clasping or tying the Bible on it, and then hanging the key upon some man's finger put into the hollow of the handle; and then one of the company saying these words (Ps. l. 19, 20), 'When thou a thief dost see,' &c., to these words, 'To use that life most vile.' If the Bible turn upon the finger (holding it by the key) when such or such a person is named, then he is judged to be the thief. Some persons that dined at the same table with me had an humor to try this trick. I declared it was very *wicked*, &c.; but, however, they would do it. And a gentleman of great acquaintance in the world said that a learned divine asserted it was no hurt, &c. I thought it might not be a sin for me to stay in the room, after I had made that profession of my dissent, &c. They tried what would be done; and, upon the naming of one or two, the key did not move; but, on the naming of one (who afterwards was known to be an accomplice in the theft), the Bible turned on the finger very plainly in the sight of divers persons, myself being one. The gentleman that was most eager to have the *experiment* holds that there never were any *apparitions*, &c. I told him that this was equivalent *to an apparition*; for here was an *ocular demonstration* of the existence and operation of an intelligent invisible being, &c."

witchcraft, seeing that our law ordains it to be punished by death," was the argument of Sir George Mackenzie, the great Scottish advocate. Nor is it less sad to see such minds as that of the great Dr. Clarke, celebrated for his logical demonstrations, thus reasoning on witchcraft, astrology, and fortune-telling: "All things of this sort, whenever they have any reality in them, are evidently diabolical; and, when they have no reality, they are cheats and lying impostures."* The great demonstrator thus confesses "the reality" of these chimeras! Another not less celebrated divine, Dr. Bentley, infers that "no English priest need affirm the existence of sorcery or witchcraft; since they now have a public law, which they neither enacted nor procured, declaring these practices to be felony!"† Did the doctor know that churchmen have had no influence in creating that belief, or in enacting this statute?

The gravity of Blackstone seems strangely disturbed, when, as a lawyer, he was compelled to acknowledge its existence. "It is a crime of which one knows not well what account to give." The commentator on the laws of England found no other resource than to turn to Addison, whose gentle sagacity could only discover, that, "*in general*, there has been such a thing as witchcraft, though one cannot give credit to any *particular* modern instance of it." Not one of these writers had yet ventured to detect the hallucinations of self-credulity in the victims, and the crimes of remorseless men in their persecutors. The name and the volume of their own countryman had never reached them, who, two centuries before, had elucidated these chimeras.

After the statute against witchcraft had been repealed in England, we must not forget that an act of the Assembly of the Calvinistic Church of Scotland confesses, "as a great national sin, the act of the British Parliament abolishing the burning and hanging of witches."

* In his "Exposition of the Church Catechism."

† Remarks upon a late "Discourse of Free-thinking," 1743, p. 47.

The name of Reginald Scot does not appear in the "Biographia Britannica;" and it was only from a short notice by Bayle, that Dr. Birch, in his translation of the General Dictionary, was induced to draw up a life of our earliest philosopher. Such was the fate of this "English gentleman," as Bayle has described him; and the philosophical reader, in what is now before him, may detect the shifting shades of truth, till it settles in its real and enduring color: the philosopher had demonstrated a truth which it required a century and a half for the world to comprehend.

That such courageous and generous tempers as that of Reginald Scot should fail themselves of being the spectators of that noble revolution in public opinion which was the ripening of their own solitary studies, is the mortifying tale of the benefactors of mankind.

THE FIRST JESUITS IN ENGLAND.

THE fate of the English Protestants, exiles under the Marian administration, was, as the day arrived, to be the lot of the English Papists under the government of Elizabeth. These opposing parties, when cast into the same precise position, had only changed their place in it; and in this revolution of England, in both cases alike, the expatriated were to return, and those at home were to become the expatriated.

During the short reign of Edward, conformity was not pressed; and notwithstanding two statutes, the one to maintain the queen's supremacy, and the other strictly to enjoin the use of the Book of Common Prayer, through the first ten or twelve years of Elizabeth, Romanist and Protestant entered into the same parish church. "The old Marian priests," whom the rigid papists indeed afterwards scornfully decried, were wont to inquire of any one, to use their own term, "whether they were *settled;*" and were satisfied to lure from the seduction of a Protestant pulpit some lonely waverer, if by chance they found an easy surrender. There were, indeed, many who would neither "settle" nor "waver;" and these were called "Occasionalists:" they insisted that "occasional conformity" had nothing *per se malum;* that human laws might be complied with or neglected, according to circumstances; so learned doctors had opined! The old religion seemed melting into the new, when the Romanists, of another temper than "the old Marian priests," protested against this pacific toleration, and procured from the fathers of the Council of Trent a declaration against schismatics and heretics: this was

but the prelude of what was to come from a final authority; but this was sufficient to divide the Romanists of England, and to alarm the Protestants, yet tender in their reformation.

The sterner Romanists gradually seceded from their preferments in the church or their station in the universities, and at length forsook the land. Two eminent persons effected a revolution among their brother-exiles, of which our national history bears such memorable traces. These extraordinary men were Dr. ALLEN, of Oriel College, a canon in the Cathedral of York, and who subsequently was invested with the purple as the English cardinal; and ROBERT PARSONS, of Baliol, afterwards the famous Jesuit. They left England at different periods; but, when they met abroad, their schemes were inseparable, — and possibly some of their writings; though it may be doubted whether the subtile and daring genius of Parsons, which Cardinal Allen declared equalled the greatest whom he had known, ever acted a secondary part.

Allen abandoned his country for ever in 1565. He soon projected the gathering of his English brothers scattered in foreign lands: he conceived the formation, for the fugitive Romanists of England, of another Oxford, ostensibly to furnish a succession of Romish priests to preserve the ancient papistry of England, which was languishing under "the old Marian priests." In 1568, an English college was formed at Douay: in twenty years, Allen witnessed his colleges rise at Rheims, at Rome,* at Louvain and St. Omer, and at Valladolid, at Seville, and at Madrid. From these cradles and nurseries of

* At Rome there was "the English Hospital," founded by two of the kings of our Saxon Heptarchy: a thousand years had consecrated that small domicile for the English native; but now the emigrants, and not the pilgrims, of England, claimed an abode beneath the papal eye. It had been a refuge to the fugitives from the days of Henry the Eighth: subsequently this English Hospital, under the auspices of Cardinal Allen, assumed the higher title of "the English College at Rome;" and the Jesuit Parsons closed his days as its rector, without attaining to the cardinalship.

holiness to Rome, and of revolt to England, issued those seminary priests whose political religionism elevated them into martyrdom, and involved them in inextricable treason.*

In these labors, Allen had, as early as 1575, associated himself with Parsons, who in that year had entered into the order of the Jesuits. Allen sought the vigorous aid of the "soldiery of Jesus," alleging "that England was as glorious a field for the propagation of faith as the Indies." From that time, the more ambiguous policy and deeper views of that celebrated society gave a new character to the Romish missionaries to England, and were the cause of all their calamities; a history written in blood, at whose legal horrors our imagination recoils, and our sympathy for the honorable and the hapless may still dim our eyes with tears.

Parsons, pensioned by Spain, and patronized by Rome; wide and deep in his comprehensive plans; slow in deliberation, but decisive in execution; of a cold and austere temper, yet flexible and fertile in intrigue; with his working head and his ceaseless hand, — once at least looked for nothing less than the dominion of England, ambitious to restore to Papal Rome a realm which had once been her fief. This daring Machiavelian spirit had long been the subtle and insidious counsellor, conjointly with Allen, of the cabinets of Madrid and of Rome. From Rome came the denunciatory bull of 1569, renewed with an artful modification in 1580, and again in 1588; and from Spain, the Armada.

It has been ascertained by his own writings, that the Jesuit Parsons, who had obtained free access to the presence of the Spanish monarch, left Madrid in 1585, about the time when

* The seminarists were universally revered as candidates of martyrdom. See Baronius, "Martyrol." Rome, 29 Dec. St. Philip Neri, who lived in the neighborhood of the English Seminary in Rome, would frequently stand near the door of the house to view the students going to the public schools. This saint used to bow to them, and salute them with the words, "Salvete flores martyrum" — *Plowden's Remarks on Missions of Gregorio Panzani*, Liege, 1794, p. 97.

the preparations for the Armada began, and returned to Madrid in 1589, the year after its destruction: so that the English Jesuit, whose sanguine views had aided the inspiration, had also the fortitude to console and to assure the Spanish monarch that "the punishment of England had only been deferred." Of this secret intercourse with the court of Madrid we have the express avowal of the English cardinal, Allen, in that infuriated "Admonition to the Nobility and People of England," the precursor of the Armada; in which this Italianated Englishman, contrary to those habits and that language of amenity to which he had been accustomed, suddenly dropped the veil, and, at the command of his sacerdotal suzerain, raged against Elizabeth more furiously than had the Mar-prelate Knox.

In the year 1580, PARSONS and CAMPIAN came the first Jesuit missionaries to their native soil. Camden was acquainted with both these personages at college. The contrast of their personal dispositions might have occasioned their selection; for the chiefs of this noted order not only exercised a refined discernment in the psychology of their brothers and agents, but always acted on an ambidextrous policy. Campian, with amenity of manners, and sweetness of elocution, with a taste imbued with literature, was adapted to win the affections of those whom Parsons sometimes terrified by his hardihood. They landed in England at different ports; and, though at first separated, subsequently they sometimes met. They travelled under a variety of disguises, sure of concealment in the priests' secret chamber of many a mansion, or they haunted unfrequented paths. A tradition in the Stonor Family still points at a tangled dell in the park where Campian wrote his "Decem Rationes," and had his books and his food conveyed to him.

We have an interesting account of the perilous position which he occupied: his devoted spirit, not to be subdued by despair, but tinged with the softest melancholy, is disclosed in

a letter to the general of the order. He tells him that he is obliged to assume a most antic dress, which he often changes as well as his name. But his studious habits were not interrupted amid this scene of trouble: he says, "Every day I ride about the country. Sitting on my horse, I meditate a short sermon, which, coming into the house, I more perfectly polish. Afterwards, if any come to me, I discourse with them, to which they bring thirsty ears." But, notwithstanding that most threatening edicts were dispersed against them, he says, that "by wariness, and the prayers of good people, we have in safety gone over a great part of the island. I see many forgetting themselves to be careful for us." He concludes, "We cannot long escape the hands of heretics, so many are the eyes, the tongues and treacheries, of our enemies. Just now I read a letter, where was written, 'Campian is taken.' This old song now so rings in mine ears wheresoever I come, that very fear hath driven all fear from me: my life is always in my hand. Let them that shall be sent hither for our supply bring this along with them, well thought on beforehand."

Our Jesuits in some respects betrayed themselves by their zeal in addressing the nation through their own publications. Parsons, under the lugubrious designation of John Howlet, — that is, Owlet, — sent forth his "screechings;" and Campian, too confident of his irrefutable "Decem Rationes," was so imprudent as to publish "A Challenge for a Public Disputation" in the presence of the queen. The eye of Walsingham opened on their suspected presence. A Roman-Catholic servant unwittingly betrayed Campian, who suffered as a state victim.* Parsons saw his own doom approaching, and van-

* As Roman Catholics usually interpolate history with miracles, so we find one here; being assured that the judge, while pasing sentence on Campian, drawing off his glove, found his hand stained with blood, which he could not wash away, as he showed to several about him who can witness of it. — *Lansdowne Manuscripts*, 982, fol. 21.

rshed! This able Jesuit was confident that the great scheme was to be realized by means more effective than the martyrdom of young priests. His awful pen was to change public opinion; and nearly forty works attest his diligence, while he mused on other resources than the pen to overturn the kingdom.

The history of the order records, that, thirty years afterwards, Father Parsons, lying on his deathbed, ordered to be brought to him the cords which had served as the instruments of torture of his martyred friend; and, having kissed them fervently, bound round his body these sad memorials of the saintly Campian.*

Two of the numerous writings ascribed to Parsons — one before the Armada, and the other subsequent to it — are remarkably connected with our national history: the ability of the writer, and the boldness of the topics, have at various periods influenced public opinion and national events. The first, "A Dialogue between a Scholar, a Gentleman, and a Lawyer," was printed abroad in 1583 or 1584, and soon found a conveyance into England. The first edition was distinguished as "Father Parsons's Green Coat," from its green cover. It is now better known as "Leicester's Commonwealth," a title drawn from one of its sarcastic phrases.

To describe this political libel as a mere invective would convey but an imperfect notion of its singularity. The occasion which levelled this artful and elaborate scandalous chronicle at Leicester, and at Leicester alone, remains as unknown as this circumstantial narrative descends to us unauthenticated and unrefuted. That the whole was framed by invention, is as incredible as that the favorite of Elizabeth during thirty years could possibly have kept his equal tenor throughout such a criminal career, besides not a few atrocities which were prevented by intervening accidents with which the writer

* "Hist. Soc. Jesu." Pars quinta, tomus posterior. Auctore Jos. Juvencio, 1710.

seems equally conversant as with those perpetrated. The mysterious marriages of Leicester; his first lady found at the foot of the stairs with her neck broken, but "without hurting the hood on her head;" husbands dying quickly; solemnized marriages reduced to contracts,—are remarkable accidents. We find strange persons in the earl's household: Salvador, the Italian chemist, a confidential counsellor, supposed to have departed from this world with many secrets, succeeded by Dr. Julio, who risked the promotion. We are told of the lady who had lost her hair and her nails; of the exquisite salad which Leicester left on the supper-table when called away, which Sir Nicholas Throgmorton swore had ended his life; of the Cardinal Chatillon, who, after having been closeted with the queen, returning to France, never got beyond Canterbury; of the sending a casuist with a case of conscience to Walsingham, to satisfy that statesman of the moral expediency of ridding the state of the Queen of Scots by an Italian philter,—all these incidents almost induce one to imagine the existence of an English Borgia, drawn full-length by the hand of a Machiavel.

If this strange history were true, it would not be wanting in a moral; for, if Leicester were himself this poisoner, there seems some reason to believe that the poisoner himself was poisoned. "The beast," as Throgmorton called this earl, found but a frail countess in the Lady Lettice, whose first husband, the Earl of Essex, had suddenly expired. The Master of the Horse had fired her passion; a hired bravo, in cleaving his skull, did not succeed in despatching the wounded lover: where the blow came from they did not doubt. Leicester was conducting his countess to Kenilworth: stopping at Cornbury Hall, in Oxfordshire, the lady was possibly reminded of the tale of Cumnor Hall. To Leicester, after his usual excessive indulgence at table, the countess deemed it necessary to administer a cordial: it was his last draught! Such is the revelation of the page, and latterly the gentleman,

of this earl. Certain it is that Leicester was suddenly seized with fever, and died on his way to Kenilworth; and that the Master of the Horse shortly after married the poisoning countess of the great poisoner.*

Had the writer unskilfully heaped together such atrocious acts or such ambiguous tales, the libel had not endured. The life of this new Borgia is composed of richer materials than extravagant crimes. It furnishes a picture of eventful days and busied personages; truth and fiction brightening and shadowing each other. Some close observer in the court circle, one who sickened at the queen's insolent favorite, was a malicious correspondent. Some realities lie on the surface; and Sir Philip Sidney was baffled or confounded when he would have sent forth his chivalric challenge to the veiled accuser.

The adversaries of the Jesuits referred to Busenbaum, a favorite author with the order, to inform the world that among the artifices of the political brotherhood was inculcated the doctrine of systematic calumny. "Whenever you would ruin a person or a government, you must begin by spreading calumnies to defame them. Many will incline to believe or to side with the propagator. Repetition and perseverance will at length give the consistency of probability, and the calumnies will stick to a distant day." A nickname a man may chance to wear out; but a system of calumny, pursued by a faction, may descend even to posterity. This principle has taken full effect on this state favorite. The libel was most diligently spread about: "La Vie Abominable" was read throughout Europe. This story of the "subject without

* This remarkable incident, in keeping with the rest, was discovered by Dr. Bliss, in a manuscript note on "Leicester's Ghost," as communicated by the page to the writer from his own personal observations. — *Athenæ Oxon.*, ii. col. 74.

If this voracious Apicius did not die of a surfeit, the fever might have been caught from the cordial. The marriage of the Master of the Horse seems to wind up the story.

subjection," who "shoots at a diadem" in England or Scotland, and turns England into a "Leicesterian commonwealth," raised princely anger: the queen condescended to have circular letters written to protest against it, considering the libel as reflecting on herself, in the choice of so principal a counsellor; and though her majesty discovered that the author was nothing less than "an incarnate devil," yet to this day the state favorite Leicester remains the most mysterious personage in our history; nor is there any historian from the days of Camden who dares to extenuate suspicions which come to us palpable as realities. In truth, the life of Leicester is darkness: his political intrigues probably were carried on with all parties, which probably he adopted, and betrayed by turns: at last his caprice stood above law. And, even in his domestic privacy, there were strange incidents, dark and secret, which eye was not to see, nor ear to listen to; and we have a remarkable chance-evidence of this singular fact in that mysterious sonnet of Spenser, prefixed to his version of Virgil's "Gnat," whose sad tale was his own, dedicated "to the deceased lord:" his "cloudy tears" have left "this riddle rare" to some "future Œdipus" who has never arisen.*

The Armada flying from our coasts evinced to Spain and Rome that Elizabeth was not to be dethroned. What then remained to hold a flattering vision of the English crown to Philip, and to cast the heretical land into confusion? The genius of this new Machiavel rose with the magnitude of the subject and the singularity of the occasion.

The policy or the weakness of Elizabeth never consented to settle the succession; and, as the queen aged, all Europe became more interested in that impending event. This was a cause of national uneasiness, and an implement for political mischief.

In 1594 was printed at Antwerp "A Conference about the

* See the subsequent article on "SPENSER."

next Succession to the Crown of England." The purpose of this memorable tract is twofold. The first part inculcates the doctrine, that society is a compact made by man with man for the good of the commonwealth; that the forms of government are diverse, and therefore are by God and nature left to the choice of the people; that kings do not derive their title from any birthright or lineal descent, but from their coronation, with conditions and admissions by the consent of the people; and that kings may be deposed, or the line of succession may be altered, as many of our own and other monarchs have suffered from various causes, being accountable for their misgovernment or natural incompetency. "Commonwealths have sometimes chastised lawfully their lawful princes, though never so lawfully descended." This has often been "commodious to the weal public;" and "it may seem that God prospered the same by the good success and successors that hence ensued."*

This theory of monarchical government was opposed to those "absurd flatterers who yield too much power to princes;" and was not likely, as we shall see, to be only a work of temporary interest. Let us, however, observe that this advocate of the people's supremacy over their sovereign's was himself the vowed slave to passive obedience, and the indefeasible and absolute rule of the sacerdotal suzerain.

The second division is a very curious historical treatise on the titles and pretensions of ten or eleven families of the English blood-royal; "what may be said for them, and what against them." From its topics, it was distinguished as "the Book of Titles." It was well adapted to perplex the nation,

* "There is," continues our author, "a point much to be noted;" which is, "what men have commonly succeeded in the places of such as have been deposed?" The successors of five of our deposed monarchs have been all eminent princes: "John, Edward the Second, Richard the Second, Henry the Sixth, and Richard the Third, have been succeeded by the three Henrys, — the Third, Fourth, and Seventh; and two Edwards, — Third and Fourth."

or raise up competitors; while, however, it reminded them "of the slaughter and the executions of the nobility of England." In this uncertainty of the succession, Isabella of Spain, whose ancestry is drawn from the Conquest through many descents, is shown to have the best title, and James of Scotland the worst.

The book appeared in London with a dedication to the Earl of Essex: this was a stroke of refined malice, and produced its full effect on the queen. In this panegyric on the earl's "eminence in place and in dignity, in favor of the prince and in high liking of the people," the wily Jesuit intimated that "no man is like to have greater sway on deciding of this great affair [the succession], when time shall come for that determination, and those that shall assist you, and are likest to follow your fame and fortune." The jealous alarm of Elizabeth had often been roused by the imprudence of the earl, and on this occasion it thundered with all her queenly rage: she herself showed him the dangerous eulogiums of the insidious dedicator, till the hapless earl was observed to grow pale, and withdrew from court with a mind disturbed, and was confined by illness till the queen's visit once more restored him to favor.

The immediate effect of the "Conference" appears by an act of Parliament of the 35th of Elizabeth, enacting that "whoever was found to have it in his house should be guilty of high treason;" but its more permanent influence is remarkable on several national occasions. This tract contributed to hasten the fate of the hapless Charles. The doctrine of cutting off the heads of kings, "the whole body being of more authority than the only head," was too opportune for the business in hand to be neglected by the Independents. The first part, licensed by their licenser, was printed at the charge of the Parliament, disguised as "Several Speeches delivered at a Conference concerning the Power of Parliament to proceed against their King for Misgovernment." The nine chapters

of the Conference were turned into these nine pretended speeches!* These furnished the matter of the speech of Bradshaw at the condemnation of the monarch; and even Milton, in his "Defence of the English People," adopted the doctrines. Never has political pamphlet directed an event more awful, and on which the destiny of a nation was suspended. Even an abstract of it served for the nonce, under the title of "the Broken Succession of the Crown of England," at the time that Cromwell was aiming at restoring the English monarchy in his own person. It was again renovated in 1681, at the time of agitating the bill of exclusion against James the Second. I believe it has appeared in other forms. Nor was the fortune of "Leicester's Commonwealth" less remarkable in serving the designs of a party. It was twice reprinted in 1641, as a melancholy picture of a royal favorite; and again, probably with the same political design, in 1706.

Parsons's claim to these two memorable tracts has been impugned. My ingenious friend, Dr. Bliss, has referred to two letters of Dr. Ashton, Master of Jesus College, and Dean Mosse, on the subject of "Leicester's Commonwealth," which he considers "fully prove" that it was not the work of Parsons. I give these letters.

Dr. Ashton to Dean Mosse.

"There is nothing in the book that favors the Spanish invasion, and all the treason is only against Leicester. Parsons has been esteemed the author of it; but I can't yet believe that 'twas his, for several reasons: —

"First, There's nothing in it of the fierce and turbulent spirit

* I have not seen this edition of "the Conference," or "Speeches:" but it must assuredly have suffered some mutilations; for Parsons often puts down some marginal notes which were not suitable to the republicans of that day; such, for instance, as these, — "A Monarchy the best Government;" "Miseries of Popular Governments." Mabbott, the licenser, must have rescinded such unqualified axioms.

of that Jesuit; but a tender concern for the queen and government, both in church and state.

"Secondly, The book makes a papist own that several of the priests and others were traitors; and often commends Burleigh, who was the chief persecutor, and ordered the writing of 'the Book of Justice,' &c.: which certainly Parsons would not have done, whose errand into England not long before was to renew the excommunication of the queen, and declare her subjects freed from their allegiance; nay, bound to take up arms against her; especially since Campian, his brother missionary, was one of those martyrs, and he himself very narrowly escaped.

"Thirdly, When Parsons and Campian came into England in '80, it was to further the designs of the King of Spain, and persuade the people, that, upon the queen's forfeiture, he had a right to take possession of her crown. But there's nothing looks that way in the book; unless defending the title of the Queen of the Scots and her son be writing for the invasion. There was a book written a little before this, for the Scotch succession, by Lesly, Bishop of Rosse, under the name of 'Morgan,' even by the connivance of Queen Elizabeth, as Camden tells us: but the seminary priests and Jesuits were all upon the Spanish right by virtue of the Pope's bull of excommunication; and, upon this foot, Parsons afterwards wrote his 'Andr. Philopater,' and 'Book of Titles,' in the name of N. Doleman.

"Fourthly, I can't think Parsons capable of writing this book; for how could a man, that from '75 to his dying day (bating a few months in the year '80) lived at Rome, be able to know all the secret transactions, both in *court* and *country*, in England, which perhaps were mysteries to all the nation, except a few statesmen about the queen?

"Lastly, I can't believe that Parsons, who was expelled (or forced to resign his fellowship in Baliol) for his immoralities, and then pretended to be a physician, and at last went to Rome and turned Jesuit, would tell that story of Leicester's management of the University of Oxford. There are several other improbabilities.

"The book seems to be written by a man moderate in religion (whether Papist or Protestant, I can't say), but a bitter enemy to Leicester; one that was intimate with all the court affairs, and,

to cover himself from *the bear's* fury, contrived that this book should come as it were from abroad, under the name of Parsons."

Dr. Mosse's Notes on the above Letter.

"First, He points out several facts to show that the book must have been written at the end of 1584, certainly between 1583 and 1585, when in '85 Leicester went general into Holland; of which there is no mention in the book, as Drake observes.

"Secondly, The design. I see nothing in the book relating to the invasion; the design being to support the title of the Queen of Scots and her son. Dr. James was the first who in print affirmed Parsons to be the only author; which was then in many mouths, that he wrote it from materials sent him by Burleigh. But as it is not very likely that Parsons, who lived at Rome, should be acquainted with all the transactions set down in that book, so 'tis less probable that Burleigh should pitch upon him for such a work; and I take the report to be grounded only on a passage in the book that mentions the *papers* Burleigh had against Leicester."

Dr. Mosse then gives what Wood has written, and Wood's inference, that neither Pitts nor Ribadeneira giving it in the list of his writings is a sufficient argument; and the doctor concludes:—

"In short, the author is very uncertain; and, for any thing that appears in it, it may as well be a Protestant's as a Papist's. I should rather think it the work of some subtle courtier, who, for safety, got it printed abroad, and sent it to England under the name of Parsons." *

Allowing these arguments to the fullest extent, they are not sufficient to disprove the authorship ascribed to Parsons. The drift and character of this English Jesuit seem not to have been sufficiently taken in by these critics. There would

* Cole's Manuscripts, xxx. 129. Cole adds, that Baker, in a manuscript note upon Pitt's and Ribadeneira's silence, observes, "That's no argument: the book was a libel, and libels are not mentioned in catalogues by friends."

certainly be no difficulty in the Jesuit assuming the mask of a moderate religionist and a loyal subject: for the advantage of the disguise, he would even venture the bold stroke of condemning the martyrs. The conclusion of Dr. Mosse, that the book might be written by either a Protestant or a Papist, betrays its studied ambiguity. It was usual with the Jesuits to conform to prevalent opinions to wrestle with them. Sometimes the Jesuit was the advocate for the dethronement of monarchs, and at other times urged passive obedience to the right divine. In truth, it is always impossible to decide on the latent meaning of the Jesuitic pen. Pascal has exhausted the argument.

Dr. Ashton may be mistaken when he asserts that Parsons and Campian came to England in 1580 to further the designs of the King of Spain. The policy of the Roman-Catholic party at that moment did not turn on the Spanish succession: during the life of the Scottish Mary, the party were all united in one design; it was at her death, in 1587, that it split into two opposite factions. At the head of one stood the Jesuit Parsons: in his rage and despair, having failed to win over the Scottish prince, he raised up the claims of the Spanish line, reckless of the ruin of his country by invasion and internal dissension. The other party, British at heart, consisting of laymen and gentlemen, would never concur in the invasion and conquest of England by a foreign prince. This curious contingency has been elucidated by our ambassador at the court of France, Sir Henry Neville, in a letter to Cecil.* It is therefore quite evident why "the book did not look *that way*," as Dr. Ashton expresses it, and why all Parsons's subsequent writings did.

Dr. Ashton considers it impossible that Parsons, who lived abroad so much of his lifetime, should be so intimate with the secret transactions of the court and country of England. But

* Winwood's "Memorials," vol. i. p. 51.

Parsons kept up a busy communication with this country. This he has himself incidentally told us, in his "Memorial for Reformation," written in 1596: he says, "I have had occasion, *above others*, for more than twenty years, not only to know the state of matters in England, but also of many foreign nations." It is recorded that he received three hundred letters from England on his "Book of Titles." He was very critical in the history of our great families; and had a taste for personal anecdote, even to the gossip of the circle. In a remarkable work which he sent forth under the name of "Andreas Philopater," a Latin reply to the queen's proclamation, he describes her ministers as *sprung from the earth.* Of Sir Nicholas Bacon, he says that he was an under-butler at Gray's Inn; of Lord Burleigh, that his father served under the king's tailor, and that his grandfather kept an alehouse; and that for himself, during Mary's reign, he had always his beads in his hand. In this defamatory catalogue, the Earl of Leicester is not forgotten: the son of a duke, the grandson of an esquire, and the great-grandson of a carpenter; a more flagitious man, a more insolent tyrant, England never knew; *never had the Catholics a more bitter enemy;* books, both in the French and the English language, have exposed his debaucheries, his adulteries, his homicides, his parricides, his thefts, his rapines, his perjuries, his oppressions of the poor, his cruelties, his deceitfulness, and the injuries he did to the Catholic religion, to the public, and to private families. This is quite a supplement to Leicester's "Commonwealth," condensing all its original spirit.

That Lord Burleigh should have supplied materials for this political libel, stands next to an impossibility. One passage asserts that "the Lord Treasurer hath as much in his keeping of Leicester's own handwriting as is sufficient to hang him, if he durst present it to her majesty." This could only have been a random stroke of the hardy writer; for, were it absolutely true, that sage would never have intrusted that secret

to any man. It would have been placing his own life in jeopardy. As for the tattle of the lady, who, in delivering a letter from Leicester into the hands of Lord Burleigh, "at the door of the withdrawing chamber" was instructed to drop it in a way that it might attract the queen's notice, and induce her majesty to read it, it surely was not necessary for Lord Burleigh to communicate this "shift" of Leicester's practices: the lady might have deposited this secret manœuvre in the ear of the faithless courtier, who unquestionably contributed his zealous quota to this Leicesterian Commonwealth.

With regard to "the Conference," the Roman-Catholic historian, Dodd, and others, have inclined to doubt whether Parsons was the author; and their argument is,—not an unusual one with the Jesuits,—you cannot prove it, and he has denied it. Cardinal Allen and Sir Francis Englefield may have contributed to this learned work; but Parsons held the pen. It appeared under the name of Doleman; and it is said that the harmless secular priest who bore that name fell into trouble in consequence. We may for once believe Parsons himself, that the name was chosen for its significance, as "a man of dole," grieving for the loss of his country. He has in other writings continued the initials, N. D., associating his feelings with these letters. On the same querulous principle, he had formerly taken that of "John Howlett," or Owlet. He fancied such significant pseudonymes, in allusion to his condition: thus he took that of "Philopater." He varied his initials, as well as his fictitious names. He was a Proteus whenever he had his pen in his hand,—Protestant and Romanist, Englishman and Spaniard.

It is now, however, too late to hesitate in fixing on the true parent of these twin productions: twins they are, though, in the intellectual state, twins are not born on the same day. These productions are marked by the same strong features; their limbs are fashioned alike; and their affinity betrays itself, even in their tones. The author could not always escape

from adopting a peculiar phraseology, or identical expressions, which unavoidably associate the later with the earlier work; the same in style, in manner, and in plan. Imitation is out of the question where there is identity. One pen composed these works, as they did thirty more.

The English writings of the Jesuit PARSONS have attracted the notice of some of our philological critics. Parsons may be ranked among the earliest writers of our vernacular diction, in its purity and pristine vigor, without ornament or polish. It is, we presume, Saxon English, unblemished by an exotic phrase. It is remarkable that our author, who passed the best part of his days abroad, and who had perfectly acquired the Spanish and the Italian languages, and slightly the French, yet appears to have preserved our colloquial English from the vicissitudes of those fashionable novelties which deform the long-unsettled Elizabethan prose. To the elevation of Hooker his imagination could never have ascended; but in clear conceptions, and natural expressions, no one was his superior. His English writings have not a sentence which to this day is either obsolete or obscure. Swift would not have disdained his idiomatic energy. Parsons was admirably adapted to be a libeller or a polemic.

HOOKER.

The government of Elizabeth, in the settlement of an ecclesiastical establishment, had not only to pass through the convulsive transition of the "old" to the "new religion," as it was called at the time; but subsequently it was thrown into a peculiar position, equally hateful to the zealots of two antagonist parties or factions.

The Romanists, who would have disputed the queen's title to the crown, were securely circumscribed by their minority, or pressed down by the secular arm; they were silenced by penal statutes, or they vanished in a voluntary exile; and even their martyrs were only allowed to suffer as traitors. A more insidious adversary was lurking at home: itself the child of the Reformation, it had been nourished at the same breast, and had shared in the common adversity; and this youthful Protestantism was lifting its arm against its elder sister.

A public event, when it becomes one of the great eras of a nation, has sometimes inspired one of those "monuments of the mind," which take a fixed station in its literature, addressed to its own, but written for all times. And thus it happened with the party of the Mar-Prelates; for these mean and scandalous satirists and their abler chiefs were the true origin of Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity." The scandalous pamphlets of the Mar-Prelates met their fate, crushed by the sharper levity of more refined wits: the more solemn volumes of their learned chiefs encountered a master-genius, such as had not yet risen in the nation.

In the state of the language, and the polemical temper of these early opposite systems of church, and indeed of civil government, it was hardly to be expected that the vindication of the ruling party should be the work of an elevated genius. The vernacular style was yet imperfectly moulded, the ear was not yet touched by modulated periods, nor had the genius of our writers yet extended to the lucid arrangement of composition: moreover, none had attained to the philosophic disposition which penetrates into the foundations of the understanding, and appeals to the authority of our consciousness. On a sudden appeared this master-mind, opening the hidden springs of eloquence, — the voice of one crying from the wilderness.

It had been more in the usual course of human affairs, that the whole controversy of ecclesiastical polity should have remained in the ordinary hands of the polemics: the cold mediocrity of the Puritan Cartwright might have been answered by the cold mediocrity of the Primate Whitgift. Their quarrel had then hardly passed their own times; and "the admonition" and "the apology," and all "the replies and rejoinders," might have been equally suffered to escape the record of an historian.

But such was not the issue of this awful contest: and the mortal combatants are not suffered to expire; for a master-genius has involved them in his own immortality.*

* When our literary history was only partially cultivated, the readers of Hooker were often disturbed, amidst the profound reasonings of "the Ecclesiastical Polity," by frequent references to volumes and pages of T. C. The editors of Hooker had thrown no light on these mysterious initials. Contemporaries are not apt to mortify themselves by recollecting that what is familiar to them may be forgotten by the succeeding age. Sir John Hawkins, a literary antiquary, drew up a memoir which explains these initials as those of Thomas Cartwright, and has correctly arranged the numerous tracts of the whole controversy. But, Hawkins having consigned this accurate catalogue to "the Antiquarian Repertory," it could be little known; and Beloe, in his "Anecdotes of Literature," vol. i., transcribing the entire memoir of Hawkins, *verbatim*, without the slightest acknowledgment, obtains a credit

The purity and simplicity of Izaak Walton's own mind reflected the perfect image of HOOKER: the individualizing touches and the careful statements in that vital biography seem as if Hooker himself had written his own life.

We first find our author in a small country parsonage, at Drayton-Beauchamp, near Aylesbury, in Buckinghamshire; where a singular occurrence led to his elevation to the mastership of the Temple.

Two of his former pupils had returned from their travels, — Sir Edwin Sandys and George Cranmer, men worthy of the names they bore: for the one became his ardent patron; and the other, the zealous assistant in his great work. Longing to revisit their much-loved tutor, who did not greatly exceed them in age, they came unexpectedly; and, to their amazement, surprised their learned friend tending a flock of sheep, with a "Horace" in his hand. His wife had ordered him to supply the absence of the servant. When released, on returning to the house, the visitors found that they must wholly furnish their own entertainment, — the lady would afford no better welcome; but even the conversation was interrupted by Hooker being called away to rock the cradle. His young friends reluctantly quit his house to seek for quieter lodgings; lamenting that his lot had not fallen on a pleasanter parsonage, and a quieter wife to comfort him after his unwearied studies. "I submit to God's will while I daily labor to possess my soul in patience and peace," was the reply of the philosophic man who could abstract his mind amid the sheep, the cradle, and the termagant.

The whole story of the marriage of this artless student would be ludicrous, but for the melancholy reflection that it brought waste and disturbance into the abode of the author of the "Ecclesiastical Polity."

According to the statutes of his college, he had been ap-

for original research. Beloe is referred to for this *authentic* information by Burnet, in his "Specimens of English Prose-writers."

pointed to preach a sermon at Paul's Cross. He arrived from Oxford weary and wet, with a heavy cold. Faint and heartless, he was greatly agitated lest he should not be able to deliver his probationary sermon; but two days' nursing by the woman of the lodgings recovered our young preacher. She was an artful woman, who persuaded him that his constitutional delicacy required a perpetual nurse; and for this purpose offered, as he had no choice of his own, to elect for him a wife. On his next arrival, she presented him with her daughter. There was a generosity in his gratitude for the nursing him for his probationary sermon, which only human beings wholly abstracted from the concerns of daily life could possibly display. He resigned the quiet of his college to be united to a female destitute alike of personal recommendations and of property. As an apology for her person, he would plead his short-sightedness; and for the other, that he never would have married for any interested motive. Thus the first step into life of a very wise man was a folly which was to endure with it. The wife of Hooker tyrannized over his days, and at last proved to be a traitress to his fame.

The mastership of the Temple was procured for the humble rector of Drayton-Beauchamp by the recommendation of his affectionate Edwin Sandys. But not without regret did this gentle spirit abandon the lowly rectory-house for "the noise" of the Temple Hall. Hooker required for his happiness neither elevation nor dignities, but solely a spot wherein his feeble frame might repose, and his working mind meditate: solitude to him was a heaven, notwithstanding his eternal wife Joan!

Hooker might have looked on the Temple as a vignette represents the greater picture. The Temple was a copy reduced of the kingdom, with the same passions and the same parties. What had occurred between the Archbishop Whitgift and the Puritan Cartwright was now opened between the lecturer and the master of the Temple.

The evening lecturer at the Temple was Walter Travers, an eminent man, of insinuating manners and of an irreproachable life. He had been nursed in the presbytery of Geneva, and was the correspondent of Beza in the French, and of Knox in the Scottish Church: above all, Travers was the firm associate of Cartwright, and the consulted oracle of the English dissenters. He ruled over an active party of the younger members; and, by insensible innovations, appears to have there established the new ecclesiastical commonwealth, which at first consisted of the most trivial innovations in ceremonies and the most idle distinctions. Travers was looking confidently to the mastership, when the appointment of Hooker crossed his ambitious hopes.

With the disciples of parity, a free election, and not a royal appointment, was a first state principle. To preserve the formality, since he could not yet possess the reality, Travers suggested to the new master of the Temple that he should not make his appearance till Travers had announced his name to the body of the members, and then he would be admitted by their consent. To this point in "the new order of things," the sage Hooker returned a reasonable refusal. "If such custom were here established, I would not disturb the order; but here, where it never was, I might not of my own head take upon me to begin it." The formality required was, in fact, a masked principle, which cast a doubt on his right, and on the authority which had granted it. "You conspire against me," exclaimed the nonconformist, "affecting superiority over me;" and, condensing all the bitterness of his mingled religion and politics, he reproached Hooker that "he had entered on his charge by virtue *only of an human creature*, and not by the *election of the people*. With TRAVERS the people were more than "human creatures:" the voice of the people was a revelation of Heaven; this sage, probably, having first counted his votes. These were the inconveniences of a transition to a new political

system: the parties did not care to understand one another. These two good men, for such they were, now brought into collision, bore a mutual respect, connected, too, by blood and friendly intercourse. But in a religious temper or times, while men mix their own notions with the inscrutable decrees of Heaven, who shall escape from the torture of insolvable polemics? Abstruse points of scholastic theology opened the rival conflict. A cry of unsound doctrine was heard. "What are your grounds?" exlaimed TRAVERS. "The words of St. Paul," replied HOOKER. "But what author do you follow in expounding St. Paul?" Hooker laid a great stress on reason on all matters which allowed of the full exercise of human reason. Two opposite doctrines now came from the same pulpit! The morning and the evening did not seem the same day. The son of Calvin thundered his shuddering dogmas: the child of Canterbury was meek and merciful. If one demolished an unsound doctrine, it was preached up again by the other. The victor was always to be vanquished, the vanquisher was always to be victor. The inner and the outer Temple appeared to be a mob of polemics.

Travers was silenced by "authority." He boldly appealed to her majesty and the privy council, where he had many friends. His petition argued every point of divinity, while he claimed the freedom of his ministry. But there stood Elizabeth's "black husband," as the virgin queen deigned in her coquetry to call the archbishop. The party of Travers circulated his petition, which was cried up as unanswerable: it was carried in "many bosoms." Hooker was compelled to reply; and the churchmen extolled "an answer answerless:" the buds of the great work appear among these sterile leaves of controversy.*

* Both these papers of Travers and Hooker are preserved in Hooker's Works. Many curious points are discussed by Hooker with admirable reasoning. The divinity of Hooker, who is the firm advocate of legal authority, is enlightened and tolerant; while Travers, who advocated unrestrained

The absence of Travers from the Temple seemed to be more influential than even his presence. He had plenteously sown the seeds of nonconformity, and the soil was rich. Hooker had foreseen the far-remote event: "Nothing can come of contention but the mutual waste of the parties contending, till a common enemy dance in the ashes of them both." It must be confessed that Hooker had a philosophical genius.

It was amid the disorders around him that the master of the Temple meditated to build up the great argument of polity, drawn from the nature of all laws, human and divine. The sour neglect and systematic opposition of the rising party of the dissenters had outwearied his musings. Clinging to the great tome which was expanding beneath his hand, the studious man entreated to be removed to some quieter place. A letter to the primate on this occasion reveals, in the sweetness of his words, his innate simplicity. He tells, that when he had lost the freedom of his cell at college, yet he found some degree of it in his quiet country parsonage: but now he was weary of the noise and opposition of the place; and God and nature did not intend him for contention, but for study and quietness. He had satisfied himself in his studies, and now had begun a treatise in which he intended the satisfaction of others: he had spent many thoughtful hours, and he hoped not in vain; but he was not able to finish what he had begun, unless removed to some quiet country parsonage, where he might see God's blessings spring out of our mother earth, and "eat his own bread in peace and privacy."

The humble wish was obtained, and the great work was prosecuted.

In 1594, four books of the "Ecclesiastical Polity" were published; and, three years afterwards, the fifth. These are for ever sanctioned by the last revisions of the author. The

personal freedom, is, in his divinity, narrow and merciless. He sees only "the elect," and he casts human nature into the flames of eternity.

intensity of study wore out a frame which had always been infirm; and his premature death left his manuscripts roughly sketched, without the providence of a guardian.

These unconcocted manuscripts remained in the sole custody of the widow. Strange rumors were soon afloat, and transcripts from Hooker's papers got abroad, attesting, that, in the termination of the "Ecclesiastical Polity," the writer had absolutely sided with the nonconformists. The great work, however, was appreciated of such national importance, that it was deemed expedient to bring it to the cognizance of the privy council, and the widow was summoned to give an account of the state of these unfinished manuscripts. Consonantly with her character, which we have had occasion to observe, in the short interval of four months which had passed since the death of Hooker, this widow had become a wife. She had at first refused to give any account of the manuscripts; but now, in a conference with the archbishop, she confessed that she had allowed certain puritanic ministers "to go into Hooker's study, and to look over his writings; and, further, that they burned and tore many, assuring her that these were writings not fit to be seen." There never was an examination by the privy council; for, the day after her confession, this late widow of Hooker was found dead in her bed. A mysterious coincidence! The suspected husband was declared innocent, so runs the tale told by honest Izaac Walton.

These manuscripts were now delivered up to the archbishop, who placed them in the hands of the learned Dr. Spenser to put into order: he was an intimate friend of Hooker, and long conversant with his arguments. However, as this scholar was deeply occupied in the translation of the Bible, he intrusted the papers to a student at Oxford, Henry Jackson, a votary of the departed genius.

On the decease of Dr. Spenser, the manuscripts of Hooker were left as "a precious legacy" to Dr. King, Bishop of London, in 1611. They were resigned with the most painful

reluctance by the speculative and ingenious student to whom they had been so long intrusted, that he looked on them with a parental eye, having transcribed them and put many things together according to his idea of the system of Hooker.* During the time the manuscripts reposed in the care of the Bishop of London, an edition of the five books of the "Ecclesiastical Polity," with some tractates and sermons, was published in 1617.† Had Dr. King thought that these manuscripts were in a state fitted for publication, he would have doubtless completed that edition. He died in 1621, and the manuscripts were claimed by Archbishop Abbot for the Lambeth Library.

Again, in 1632, the five undoubted genuine books were reprinted. Laud, then Archbishop of Canterbury, attracted probably by this edition, examined the papers. He was startled by some antagonist principles, and left the phantom to sleep in its darkness: whether some doctrines which broadly inculcate *jure divino* were touches from the Lambeth quarter, or whether the interpolating hand of some presbyter had insidiously turned aside the weapon, the conflicting opinions could not be those of the judicious Hooker.

But their fate and their perils had not yet terminated: the episcopalian walls of Lambeth were no longer an asylum, when the manuscripts of Hooker were to be grasped by the searching hands and heads of Prynne and Hugh Peters, by a vote of the Commons! At this critical period the sixth and eighth books were given to the world, announced as "a work long expected, and now published according to the most authentique copies." We are told of six transcripts with which this edition was collated. It is perplexing to understand when these copies got forth, and how they were all alike deficient in

* "A studious and cynical person, who never expected or desired more than his small preferment. He was a great admirer of Richard Hooker, and collected some of his small treatises." — *Athenæ Oxonienses.*

† Anthony Wood has said it contained all the eight books (followed by General Dictionary and Biographia Britannica), and accused Gauden of pretending to publish three books for the first time in 1662.

the seventh book, which the setter-forth of this edition declares to be irrecoverable. After the Restoration, Dr. Gauden made an edition of Hooker: in the dedication to the king, he offers the work as "now augmented, and I hope completed, with the three last books, so much desired and so long concealed." This remarkable expression indicates some doubt whether he possessed the perfect copies; nor does he inform us of the manner in which he had recovered the lost seventh book. The recent able editor of the works of Hooker favors its genuineness by internal evidence, notwithstanding it bears marks of hasty writing: but he irresistibly proves that the sixth book is wholly lost; that which is named the sixth being never designed as a part of the "Ecclesiastical Polity."

Both the great parties are justly entitled to suspect one another: a helping hand was prompt to twist the nose of wax to their favorite shape; and the transcripts had always omissions, and, we may add, commissions. Some copies of the concluding book asserted that "princes on earth are only accountable to Heaven;" while others read, "to the people." We perceive the facility of such slight emendations, and may be astonished at their consequences; but we need not question the hands which furnished the various readings. When we recollect the magnificent entrance into the work, we must smile at the inconclusive conclusion, the small issue from so vast an edifice. "Too rigorous it were that the breach of human law should be held a deadly sin. A mean there is between extremities, *if so be that we can find it out.*" Never was the *juste milieu* suggested with such hopeless diffidence. Such was not the tone, nor could be the words, of our eloquent and impressive HOOKER. From the first conception of his system, his comprehensive intellect had surveyed all its parts, and the intellectual architecture was completed before the edifice was constructed. This admirable secret in the labor of a single work, on which many years were to be consumed, our author has himself revealed to us; a secret which

may be a lesson. "I have endeavored that every former part might give strength unto all that follow, and every latter bring some light unto all before: so that if the judgments of men do but hold themselves in suspense, as touching the first more general meditations, till in order they have perused the rest that ensue, what may seem dark at the first will afterwards be found more plain, even as the latter particular decisions will appear, I doubt not, more strong, when the other have been read before."* Here we have an allusion to a noble termination of his system.

This great work of Hooker strictly is theological; but here it is considered simply as a work of literature and philosophy. The first book lays open the foundations of law and order, to escape from "the mother of confusion which breedeth destruction. The lowest must be knit to the highest." We may read this first book as we read the reflections of Burke on the French Revolution, where what is peculiar or partial or erroneous in the writer does not interfere with the general principles of the more profound views of human policy. And it is remarkable, that during the anarchical misrule of France, when all governments seemed alike unstable, some one, who had not wholly lost his senses among those raving politicians, published separately this *first book of "Ecclesiastical Polity;"* a timely admonition, however, alas! timeless. I was not surprised to find classed among "Legal Bibliography" the works of Hooker.

The fate of those controversies which in reality admit of no argument is singularly exemplified in the history of this great work. These are the controversies where the parties apparently going the same course, and intent on the same object, but impelled by opposite principles, can never unite: like two parallel lines, they may run on together, but remain at the same distance, though they should extend themselves to infin-

* "Ecclesiastical Polity," book first.

ity. Opposite propositions are assigned by each party, or from the same premises are educed opposite inferences. In the present case, both parties inquired after a model for church-government: there was none! Apostolical Christianity had hardly left the old synagogue. Hooker therefore asserted that the form of church-government was merely a human institution regulated by laws; and that laws were not made for private men to dispute, but to obey. The nonconformist urged the Protestant right of private judgment and a satisfied conscience. Hooker, alarmed at this irruption of schisms to maintain established authority, or rather supremacy, was driven to take refuge in the very argument which the Romanist used with the Protestant.

The elaborate preface of Hooker is a tract of itself: it is the secret history of nonconformity, and of the fiery Calvin. Yet was it from positions here laid down that James the Second declared that it was one of the two books which sent him back to the fold of Rome. It is not therefore surprising, that when a part was eagerly translated by an English Romanist to his holiness, who had declared that "he had never met with an English book whose writer deserved the name of an author!" — so low then stood our literature in the eyes of the foreigner, — that the pope perceived nothing anti-papal in the eloquent advocate of established authority, while he was deeply struck at the profundity of the genius of "a poor obscure English priest;" and the Bishop of Rome exclaimed, "There is no learning that this man has not searched into; nothing too hard for his understanding; and his books will get reverence by age." Our James the First, who, it must be allowed, was no ordinary judge of polemics, on his arrival in England inquired after Hooker, and was informed that his recent death had been deeply lamented by the queen. "And I receive it with no less sorrow," observed the new English monarch; "for I have received more satisfaction in reading a leaf in Mr. Hooker than I have had in large treatises by

many of the learned: many others write well; but yet, in the next age, they will be forgotten."

The attestations of his holiness and our James the First, to some of my readers, may appear very suspicious. They are, however, prophetic; and this is an evidence that the "Ecclesiastical Polity" must contain principles more deeply important than those which might more particularly have been grateful to these regal critics. Our sage, it is true, has not escaped from a severer scrutiny, and has been taxed as "too apt to acquiesce in all ancient tenets." What was transitory or what was partial in this great work may be subtracted without injury to its excellence or its value. Hooker has written what posterity reads. The spirit of a later age, progressive in ameliorating the imperfect condition of all human institutions, must often return to pause over the first book of "Ecclesiastical Polity," where the master-genius has laid the foundations and searched into the nature of all laws whatever. HOOKER is the first vernacular writer whose classical pen harmonized a numerous prose. While his earnest eloquence, freed from all scholastic pedantry, assumed a style stately in its structure, his gentle spirit sometimes flows into natural humor, lovely in the freshness of its simplicity.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

WERE I another Baillet, solely occupied in collecting the "*jugemens des sçavans*," — the decisions of the learned, — the name of Sir Philip Sidney would bring forth an awful crash of criticism, rarely equalled in dissonance and confusion.

He who first ventured to pronounce a final condemnation on "THE ARCADIA" of Sir PHILIP SIDNEY, as a "tedious, lamentable, pedantic, pastoral romance," was Horace Walpole, — a decision suited to the heartlessness which wounded the personal qualities of an heroic man, the pride of a proud age. Have modern critics too often caught the watchword, when given out by an imposing character? The irregular Hazlitt honestly confides to us, in an agony of despair, that "Sir Philip Sidney is a writer for whom I cannot acquire a taste," tormented by a conviction that a taste should be acquired. The peculiar style of this critic is at once sparkling and vehement, antithetical and metaphysical. The volcano of his criticism heaves; the short, irruptive periods clash with quick repercussion; the lava flows over his pages, till it leaves us in the sudden darkness of an hypercriticism on "the celebrated description of the 'Arcadia.'"

Gifford, once the Coryphæus of modern criticism, whose native shrewdness admirably fitted him for a partisan both in politics and in literature, did not deem Walpole's depreciation of Sidney "to be without a certain degree of justice: the plan is poor, the incidents trite, the style pedantic." But our prudential critic harbors himself in some security by confessing to "some nervous and elegant passages."

At our northern Athens, the native coldness has touched the leaves of "the Arcadia" like a frost in spring. The agreeable researcher into the history of fiction confesses the graceful beauty of the language, but considers the whole as "extremely tiresome." Another critic states a more alarming paroxysm of criticism, — that of being "lulled to sleep over the interminable 'Arcadia.'"

What innocent lover of books does not imagine that "the Arcadia" of Sidney is a volume deserted by every reader, and only to be classed among the folio romances of the Scuderies, or the unmeaning pastorals whose scenes are placed in the golden age? But such is not the fact. "Nobody, it is said, reads 'the Arcadia:' we have known very many persons who read it, men, women, and children; and never knew one read it without deep interest and admiration," exclaims an animated critic, probably the poet Southey.* More recent votaries have approached the altar of this creation of romance.

It may be well to remind the reader, that although this volume, in the revolutions of times and tastes, has had the fate to be depreciated by modern critics, it has passed through fourteen editions, suffered translations in every European language, and is not yet sunk among the refuse of the bibliopolists. "The Arcadia" was long, and it may still remain, the haunt of the poetical tribe. SIDNEY was one of those writers whom Shakspeare not only studied, but imitated in his scenes, copied his language, and transferred his ideas.† SHIRLEY, BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, and our early dramatists, turned to "THE ARCADIA" as their text-book. Sidney enchanted two later brothers in WALLER and COWLEY; and the dispassionate Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE was so struck by

* "Annual Review," iv. 547.

† Who does not recognize a well-known passage in SHAKSPEARE, copied, too, by COLERIDGE and BYRON, in these words of SIDNEY: "More sweet than a gentle south-west wind, which comes creeping over flowery fields

"the Arcadia," that he found "the true spirit of the vein of ancient poetry in Sidney." The world of fashion in Sidney's age culled their phrases out of "the Arcadia," which served them as a complete "Academy of Compliments."

The reader who concludes that "the Arcadia" of Sidney is a pedantic pastoral has received a very erroneous conception of the work. It was unfortunate for Sidney that he borrowed the title of "the Arcadia" from Sannazaro; which has caused his work to be classed among pastoral romances, which it nowise resembles. The pastoral part stands wholly separated from the romance itself, and is only found in an interlude of shepherds at the close of each book: dancing brawls, or reciting verses, they are not agents in the fiction. The censure of pedantry ought to have been restricted to the attempt of applying the Roman prosody to English versification, the momentary folly of the day; and to some other fancies of putting verse to the torture.

"The Arcadia" was not one of those spurious fictions invented at random, where an author has little personal concern in the narrative he forms.

When we forget the singularity of the fable, and the masquerade dresses of the actors, we pronounce them to be real personages; and that the dramatic style distinctly conveys to

and shadowed waters in the extreme heat of summer"? Such delightful diction, which can only spring out of deep poetic emotion, may be found in the poetic prose of Sidney.

> "Oh! it came o'er my ear like the sweet south,
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odor."
>
> SHAKSPEARE'S *Twelfth Night*, act i. sc. 1

> "And sweeter than the gentle south-west wind,
> O'er willowy meads and shadowed waters creeping,
> And Ceres' golden fields"
>
> COLERIDGE'S *First Advent of Love*.

> "Breathing all gently o'er his cheek and mouth,
> As o'er a bed of violets the sweet south."
>
> *Don Juan*, canto 2, verse 168.

us incidents, which, however veiled, had occurred to the poet's own observation, as we perceive that the scenes which he has painted with such precision must have been localities. The characters are minutely analyzed; and so correctly preserved, that their interior emotions are painted forth in their gestures as well as revealed in their language. The author was himself the tender lover whose amorous griefs he touched with such delicacy, and the undoubted child of chivalry he drew; and, in these finer passions, he seems only to have multiplied himself.

The manners of the court of Elizabeth were still chivalric; and Sidney was trained in the discipline of those generous spirits whom he has nobly described as men of "high-erected thoughts seated in a heart of courtesy." Hume has censured these "affectations, conceits, and fopperies," as well became the philosopher of the Canongate; but there was a reality in this shadow of chivalry. Amadis de Gaul himself never surpassed the chivalrous achievements of the Earl of Essex: his life, indeed, would form the finest of romances, could it be written. He challenged the Governor of Corunna to single combat for the honor of the nation, and proposed to encounter Villars, Governor of Rouen, on foot or on horseback. And thus run his challenge: "I will maintain the justice of the cause of Henry the Fourth of France against the league; and that I am a better man than thou, and that my mistress is more beautiful than thine." This was the very language and the deed of one of the Paladins. It was this spirit, fantastic as it may appear to us, which stirred Sidney, when Parsons the Jesuit, or some one who lay concealed in a dark corner of the court, sent forth anonymously the famous state libel of "Leicester's Commonwealth." To the unknown libeller who had reflected on the origin of the Dudleys, that "the Duke of Northumberland was not born a gentleman," Sir Philip Sidney, in the loftiest tone of chivalry, designed to send a cartel of defiance. Touched to the quick in any blur

in the *Stemmata Dudleiana*, — which, it is said, occupied the poet Spenser when under the princely roof of Leicester, — Sidney exclaims, "I am a Dudley in blood, that duke's daughter's son; my chief honor is to be a Dudley; and truly am I glad to have cause to set forth the nobility of that blood: none but this fellow of invincible shamelessness could ever have called so palpable a matter in question." He closed with the intention of printing at London a challenge which he designed all Europe to witness. "Because that thou, the writer hereof, doth most falsely lay want of gentry to my dead ancestors, I say that thou therein liest in thy throat, which I will be ready to justify upon thee in any place of Europe where thou wilt assign me a free place of coming, as within three months after the publishing thereof I may understand thy mind. And this which I write I would send to thine own hands, if I knew thee; but I trust it cannot be intended that he should be ignorant of this printed in London, who knows the very whisperings of the Privy Chamber." *

We, who are otherwise accustomed to anonymous libels, may be apt to conclude that there was something fantastical in sending forth a challenge through all Europe, — we, who are content with the obscure rencounter of a morning, and with the lucky chance of an exchange of shots.

The narrative of "the Arcadia" is peculiar; but, if the reader's fortitude can yield up his own fancy to the feudal poet, he will find the tales diversified. Sidney had traced the vestiges of feudal warfare in Germany, in Italy, and in France; those wars of petty states where the walled city was oftener carried by stratagem than by storm, and where the chivalrous heroes, like champions, stepped forth to challenge each other in single combat, almost as often as they were viewed as generals at the head of their armies. Our poet's

* Sidney alludes to all that secret history of Leicester which Parsons the Jesuit pretends to disclose in his "Leicester's Commonwealth." This challenge was found among the Sidney Papers, but probably was not issued.

battles have all the fierceness and the hurry of action, as if told by one who had stood in the midst of the battle-field; and, in his "shipwreck," men fight with the waves ere they are flung on the shore, as if the observer had sat on the summit of a cliff watching them.

He describes objects on which he loves to dwell with a peculiar richness of fancy. He had shivered his lance in the tilt, and had managed the fiery courser in his career: that noble animal was a frequent object of his favorite descriptions; he looks even on the curious and fanciful ornaments of its caparisons; and, in the vivid picture of the shock between two knights, we see distinctly every motion of the horse and the horseman.* But sweet is his loitering hour in the sunshine of luxuriant gardens, or as we lose ourselves in the green solitudes of the forests which most he loves. His poetic eye was pictorial; and the delineations of objects, both in art and nature, might be transferred to the canvas.

There is a feminine delicacy in whatever alludes to the female character, not merely courtly, but imbued with that sensibility which St. Palaye has remarkably described as "full of refinement and fanaticism." And this may suggest an idea not improbable, that Shakspeare drew his fine conceptions of the female character from Sidney. Shakspeare solely, of all our elder dramatists, has given true beauty to woman; and Shakspeare was an attentive reader of "the Arcadia." There is something, indeed, in the language and the conduct of Musidorus and Pyrocles, two knights, which may startle the reader, and may be condemned as very unnatural and most affected. Their friendship resembles the love which is felt for the beautiful sex, if we were to decide by their impassioned conduct and the tenderness of their language. Coleridge observed that the language of these two friends in "the Arcadia" is such as we would not now use,

* See "the Arcadia," p. 267; eighth edition, 1633.

except to women; and he has thrown out some very remarkable observations.* Warton, too, has observed, that the style of friendship between males in the reign of Elizabeth would not be tolerated in the present day: sets of sonnets, in a vein of tenderness which now could only express the most ardent affection for a mistress, were then prevalent.† They have not accounted for this anomaly in manners by merely discovering them in the reigns of Elizabeth and James. It is unquestionably a remains of the ancient chivalry, when men, embarking in the same perilous enterprise together, vowed their mutual aid and their personal devotion. The dangers of one knight were to be participated, and his honor to be maintained, by his brother-in-arms. Such exalted friendships, and such interminable affections, often broke out both in deeds and words, which, to the tempered intercourse of our day, offend by their intensity. A male friend, whose life and fortune were consecrated to another male, who looks on him with adoration, and who talks of him with excessive tenderness, appears to us nothing less than a chimerical and monstrous lover! It is certain, however, that, in the age of chivalry, a Damon and Pythias were no uncommon characters in that brotherhood.

It is the imperishable diction, the language of Shakspeare before Shakspeare wrote, which diffuses its enchantment over "the Arcadia;" and it is for this that it should be studied; and the true critic of Sidney, because the critic was a true poet, offers his unquestioned testimony in Cowper: —

"SIDNEY, WARBLER OF POETIC PROSE."

Even those playful turns of words, caught from Italian models

* See Coleridge's "Table-talk," ii. 178.

† Richard Barnfielde's "Affectionate Shepherd" forms such a collection of sonnets which were popular. The poet bewails his unsuccessful love for a beautiful youth, yet professing the chastest affection. Poets, like mockingbirds, repeat the notes of others, till the cant becomes idle, and the fashion of style obsolete.

which are usually condemned, conceal some subtility of feeling, or rise in a pregnant thought.* The intellectual character of Sidney is more serious than volatile: the habits of his mind were too elegant and thoughtful to sport with the low comic; and one of the defects of "the Arcadia" is the attempt at burlesque humor in a clownish family. Whoever is not susceptible of great delight in the freshness of the scenery, the luxuriant imagery, the graceful fancies, and the stately periods, of "the Arcadia," must look to a higher source than criticism to acquire a sense which nature and study seem to deny him.

I have dwelt on the finer qualities of "the Arcadia:" whenever the volume proves tedious, the remedy is in the reader's own hands, provided he has the judgment often to return to a treasure he ought never to lose.

It is indeed hardly to be hoped, that the volatile loungers over our duodecimos of fiction can sympathize with manners, incidents, and personages which for them are purely ideal: the truth of nature which lies under the veil must escape from their eyes; for how are they to grow patient over the interminable pages of a folio, unbroken by chapters, without a single resting-place?† And I fear they will not allow for that formal complimentary style, borrowed from the Italians and the Spaniards, which is sufficiently ludicrous.

The narrative, too, is obstructed by verses, in which Sidney

* A lady who has become enamoured of the friend who is pleading for her lover, and suddenly makes the fatal avowal to that friend, thus expresses her emotion: "Grown bolder or madder, or bold with madness, I discovered my affection to him." "He left nothing unassayed to disgrace himself, to grace his friend." — P. 39.

† In the late Mr. Heber's treasures of our vernacular literature, there was a copy of "the Arcadia," with manuscript notes by Gabriel Harvey. He had also divided the work into chapters, enumerating the general contents of each. — *Bib. Heberiana*, part the first. A republication of this copy — omitting the continuations of the romance by a strange hand, and all the eclogues, and most of the verses — would form a desirable volume, not too voluminous.

never obtained facility or grace. Nor will the defects of the author be always compensated by his beauties; for "the Arcadia" was indeed a fervent effusion, but an uncorrected work. The author declared that it was not to be submitted to severer eyes than those of his beloved sister, "being done in loose sheets of paper, most of it in her presence, the rest by sheets sent as fast as they were done." The writer, too, confesses to "a young head having many fancies begotten in it, which, if it had not been in some way delivered, would have grown a monster; and more sorry might I be that they came in, than they gat out." So truly has Sidney expressed the fever of genius, when working on itself in darkness and in doubt, — absorbing reveries, tumultuous thoughts, the ceaseless inquietudes of a soul which has not yet found a voice. Even on his death-bed, the author of "the Arcadia" desired its suppression: but the fame her noble brother could contemn was dear to his sister, who published these loose papers without involving the responsibility of the writer, affectionately calling the work "the Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia;" and this volume of melodious prose, of visionary heroism, and the pensive sweetness of loves and friendships, became the delight of poets.

There is one more work of Sidney, perhaps more generally known than "the Arcadia," — his "Defence of Poetry." Lord Orford sarcastically apologized, in the second edition of his "Royal and Noble Authors," for his omission of any notice of this production. "I had forgotten it," he says; and he adds, "A proof that I at least did not think it sufficient foundation for so high a character as he acquired." It was a more daring offence to depreciate this work of love than the romance which at least lay farther removed from the public eye. The "Defence of Poetry" has had, since the days of Walpole, several editions by eminent critics. Sidney, in this luminous criticism, and effusion of poetic feeling, has introduced the principal precepts of Aristotle, touched by the fire

and sentiment of Longinus; and, for the first time in English literature, has exhibited the beatitude of criticism in a poet-critic.

Sir PHILIP SIDNEY assuredly was one of the most admirable of mankind, largely conspicuous in his life, and unparalleled in his death. But was this singular man exempt from the frailties of our common nature? If we rely on his biographer Zouch, we shall not discover any: if we trust to Lord Orford, we shall perceive little else. The truth is, that, had Sidney lived, he might have grown up to that ideal greatness which the world adored in him; but he perished early, not without some of those errors of youth, which, even in their rankness, betrayed the generous soil whence they sprung. His fame was more mature than his life, which indeed was but the preparation for a splendid one. We are not surprised that to such an accomplished knight the crown of Poland was offered, and that all England went into mourning for their hero. We discover his future greatness, if we may use the expression, in the noble termination of his early career, rather than in the race of glory which he actually ran. The life of Sidney would have been a finer subject for the panegyric of a Pliny, than for the biography of a Plutarch: his fame was sufficient for the one, while his actions were too few for the other.*

* This summary of the character of Sidney I wrote nearly thirty years ago in the "Quarterly Review."

SPENSER.

THOUGH little is circumstantially related, yet frequent outbreakings, scattered throughout the writings of Spenser, commemorate the main incidents of his existence. His emotions become dates, and no poet has more fully confided to us his "secret sorrows."

Spenser in the far north was a love-lorn youth when he composed "the Shepherd's Calendar." This rustic poem, rustic from an affectation of the Chaucerian style, though it bears the divisions of the twelve months, displays not the course of the seasons so much as the course of the poet's thoughts: the themes are plaintiff or recreative, amatorial or satirical, and even theological, in dialogues between certain interlocutors. To some are prefixed Italian mottoes; for that language then stamped a classical grace on our poetry. In the eclogue of January, we perceive that it was still the season of hope and favor with the amatory poet; for the motto is, *Anchora Speme* ("Yet I hope"): but in the eclogue of June we discover *Gia Speme Spenta* ("Already hope is extinguished"). A positive rejection by Rosalind herself had for ever mingled gall with his honey, and he ungenerously inveighs against the more successful arts of a hated rival. Rosalind was, indeed, not the Cynthia of a poetic hour: deep was the poet's first love; and that obdurate mistress had called him "her Pegasus," and laughed at his sighs.

It was when the forlorn poet had thus lost himself in the labyrinth of love, and "the Shepherd's Calendar" had not yet closed, that his learned friend Harvey, or, in his poetical

appellative, Hobbinol, to steal him away from the languor of a country retirement, invited him to southern vales, and with generous warmth introduced "the unknown" to Sir Philip Sidney. This important incident in the destiny of Spenser has been carefully noted by a person who conceals himself under the initials E. K., and who is usually designated as "the old commentator on 'the Shepherd's Calendar.'" This E. K. is a mysterious personage, and will remain undiscovered to this day, unless the reader shall participate in my own conviction.

"The Shepherd's Calendar" was accompanied by a commentary on every separate month; and this singularity of an elaborate commentary in the first edition of the work of a living author was still more remarkable by the intimate acquaintance of the commentator with the author himself. E. K. assures us, and indeed affords ample evidence, that "he was privy to all his (the poet's) designs." He furnishes some domestic details which no one could have told so accurately, except he to whom they relate; and we find our commentator also critically conversant with many of the author's manuscripts which the world has never seen. Rarely has one man known so much of another. The poet and the commentator move together as parts of each other. In the despair of conjecture, some ventured to surmise that the poet himself had been his own commentator. But the last editor of Spenser is indignant at a suggestion which would taint with strange egotism the modest nature of our bard. Yet E. K. was no ordinary writer: an excellent scholar he was, whose gloss has preserved much curious knowledge of ancient English terms and phrases. We may be sure, that a pen so abundant, and so skilfully exercised, was not one to have restricted itself to this solitary lucubration of his life and studies. The commentary, moreover, is accompanied by a copious and erudite preface, *addressed to Gabriel Harvey;* and the style of these pages is too remarkable not to be recognized. At length let

me lift the mask from this mysterious personage by declaring that E. K. is Spenser's dear and generous friend, Gabriel Harvey himself. I have judged by the strong peculiarity of Harvey's style: one cannot long doubt of a portrait marked by such prominent features. Pedantic but energetic, thought pressed on thought, sparkling with imagery, mottled with learned allusions, and didactic with subtle criticism, — this is our Gabriel! The prefacer describes the state of our bardling as that of "young birds that be nearly crept out of their nest, who, by little, first prove their tender wings before they make a greater flight. And yet our new poet flieth as a bird that in time shall be able to keep wing with the best."

From this detection, we may infer that the Commentary was an innocent *ruse* of the zealous friend to overcome the resolute timidity of our poet.* His youthful muse, teeming with her future progeny, was, however, morbidly sensible in the hour of parturition. Conscious of her powers, thus closes the address "To his Booke:" —

> "And, when thou art past jeopardie,
> Come tell me what was said of me,
> And I will send more after thee."

After several editions, the work still remained anonymous; and the unnamed poet was long referred to by critics of the day only as "the late unknown poet," or "the gentleman who wrote 'the Shepherd's Calendar.'"

In Sir Philip Sidney the youthful poet found a youthful patron. The shades of Penshurst opened to leisure and the muse. "The Shepherd's Calendar" at length concluded,

* A strange personage has been fixed on as the commentator. Spenser lodged with a Mrs. Kerke, where his parcels were directed. E. K. has been conjectured to be Mr. Kerke, her husband!

It is a proof of the deficient skill of the modern editors of Spenser, Hughes, and Aikin, that they have omitted the curious and valuable Commentary of E. K. It has been judiciously restored to the last and best edition, by Mr. Todd. The woodcuts might also have been preserved.

"the Poet's Year" was dedicated to "Maister Philip Sidney, worthy of all titles, both of learning and chivalry." Leicester, the uncle of Sidney, was gained; and from that moment Spenser entered into a golden servitude.

The destiny of Spenser was to be thrown among courtiers, and to wear the silken trammels of noble patrons, — a life of honorable dependence among eminent personages. Here a seductive path was opened, not easily scorned by the gentle mind of him whose days were to be counted by its reveries, and the main business of whose life was to be the cantos of his "Faery Queen."

Of the favors and mortifications during his career of patronage, and of his intercourse with the court, too little is known; though sufficient we shall discover to authenticate the reality of his complaints, the verity of his strictures, and all the flutterings of the sickening heart of him who moves round and round the interminable circle of "hope deferred."

Our poet was now ascending the steps of favoritism; and the business of his life was with the fair and the great. He looked up to the smiles of distinguished ladies; for to such is the greater portion of his poems dedicated. If her majesty gloried in "the Faery Queen," we are surprised to find that the most exquisite of political satires, "Mother Hubbard's Tale," should be addressed to the Lady Compton and Monteagle; that "the Tears of the Muses" were inscribed to Lady Strange; and that "the Ruins of Time" are dedicated to the Countess of Pembroke. For others, their nuptials were graced by the music of his verse, or their sorrows were soothed by its elegiac tenderness.* In the "Epithalamion" on his own marriage, the poet reminds —

* These complimentary sonnets, evidently composed "for the nonce," are not the happiest specimens in our language of these minor poems, no more than they are of the real genius of Spenser. I have seen a German reprint, consisting *only* of Spenser's Sonnets, by the learned Von Hammer. Foreign critics often startle one by their fancies on English poetry.

"The sacred sisters who have often times
Been to the aiding others to adorn,
Whom ye thought worthy of your graceful rymes,
That even the greatest did not greatly scorn
To hear their names sung in your simple lays,
But joyed at their praise."

"The Tears of the Muses," as one of his plaintive poems is called, had possibly been spared, had the poet only moved among that bevy of ladies whose names are enshrined in his volumes, around the queen, whose royalty so frequently rises with splendor in his verse. Unawares, perhaps, the gentle bard discovered that personal attachments by cruel circumstances were converted into political connections; that a favorite must pay the penalty of favoritism; and that, in binding himself more closely to his patrons, he was wounded the more deeply by their great adversary; and in gaining Sidney, Leicester, and Essex, Spenser was doomed to feel the potent arm of the scornful and unpoetic Burleigh.

The queen was the earliest and the latest object of our poet's musings. "The Maiden Queen" enters into almost every poem. Shortly after the publication of "the Shepherd's Calendar," wherein her majesty occupies the month of April, Spenser, in writing to Harvey, has this remarkable passage: "Your desire to hear of my late being with her majesty must die in itself." By this ambiguous reply, it is, however, evident that Harvey, and probably Spenser himself, had looked forwards, by the intervention of his great patrons, that "the unknown poet," as he is called by "the old commentator," would have been honored by an interview with the royal poetess. Elizabeth, among her princely infirmities, had the ambition of verse. She was afterwards saluted as —

"A peerless prince and peerless poetess" —

by Spenser, who must, however, have closed his ear at her harsher numbers.* We may regret that we know so little of

* We have several printed specimens of her majesty's poetry, which does not want for elevation of thought; but to compose poetry with the

our Spenser's intercourse with the queen. If Sidney made him known to her majesty, as Philips has told, the poet might have read to the queen the earlier cantos of his romantic epic. The poet himself has only recorded that "the Shepherd of the Ocean," Sir Walter Raleigh, brought him into the presence of Cynthia, "the Queen of the Ocean," who —

> "To his oaten pipe inclined her ear,
> And it desired, at timely hours, to hear."

The Lord Treasurer Burleigh seems to have marred those "timely hours." Spenser had lingered before the fountain of court favor; and how often the dark shadow of the political minister intervened between the poet and the throne, we are reminded by the deep sensitiveness of the victim, the murmurs, and even the scorn, of the indignant bard.

Under the patronage of Leicester, the poet's services were transferred to Lord Arthur Grey, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, who appointed Spenser his secretary. He has vindicated this viceroy's administration, in the "Faery Queen," by shadowing forth his severe justice in Arthegal, accompanied by his "Iron Man," whose iron flail "threshed out falsehood" in their quest of Ierne, in that "Land of Ire," where justice and the executioner were ever erratic.

Of the brief life of the poet, his better years were consumed in Ireland, where he filled several appointments more honorable than lucrative. His slender revenue seems not to have flourished under a grant of land from the crown, on the conditions attached to it in 1585.* Cast into active service,

energy of her prose, deprived her majesty of all the grace and melody of verse. I have been informed, on the best authority, that Elizabeth exercised her poetical pen more voluminously than we have hitherto known; for that there exists a manuscript volume of her majesty's poems in that rich repository of State-papers, — the Hatfield Collection.

* Three thousand acres of dilapidated estates of the Earl of Desmond. The receivers of these grants were called "the Undertakers," as they were bound to bring the lands into cultivation, which, after the ravages of fire

the musings of the "Faery Queen" were assuredly often thrown aside: its fate was still dubious; for Ireland was not a land of the Muses, as he himself declared; when a chance occurrence, the visit of Rawleigh to that country, gave Spenser another Sidney. The "Faery Queen" once more opened its mystical leaves on the banks of the Mulla, before a judge whose voice was fame.

> "And, when he heard the music that I made,
> He found himself full greatly pleased at it:
> He gan to cast great liking to my lore,
> And great disliking to *my luckless lot*,
> *That banished had myself, like wight forlore,*
> *Into that waste where I was quite forgot.*"

Spenser has here disclosed involuntarily "the secret sorrow."

The acres of Kilcolman offered no delights to "the wight forlore, forgotten in that waste." Our tender and melancholy poet was not blessed with that fortitude, which, even in a barren solitude, can muse on its own glory, as Petrarch and Rousseau were wont, and which knows also to value a repose freed from spiteful rivalries and mordacious malignity. And now opened his tedious suings at court; for what, but to obtain some situation in his native home, which offered repose of mind, and carelessness of the future? We know of his restless wanderings to England, and his constant returns to Ireland. We find the poet, in 1590, wearied by solicitations, throwing out the immortal lines so painfully descriptive of—

> "What hell it is in suing long to bide."

It was in this year that the first three books of the romantic epic were published; which was followed by the grant of a pension in February, 1591. But, five years afterwards, the poet still remains the same querulous court-suitor; the mise-

and sword, consisted of tenantless farms and a wasted soil. Sir Walter Rawleigh had a grant of twelve thousand acres, which he probably found profitless; for he made them over at a low rate to the Boyle Family.

rable man wasting his days and his nights: for then he tells us, in his "Prothalamion," how on a summer's day he —

> "Walked forth, to ease his pain,
> Along the shore of silver-streaming Thames.
> ——————I whose sullen care,
> Through discontent of my long fruitless stay
> In princes' court, and expectation vain
> Of idle hopes which still do fly away,
> Like empty shadows, to afflict my brain."

When this was written, Spenser had possessed the lands of Kilcolman more than ten years, and held his pension. Were the lands profitless, and the pension still to be solicited? The poet has only perpetuated his "secret sorrows:" his pride or his delicacy has thrown a veil over them. He has sent down to posterity his disappointments, without alluding to the nature of his claims.

It was in 1597 that Spenser laid before the queen his memorable "View of the State of Ireland." This state memorial still makes us regret that our poet only wrote verse: there is a charm in his sweet and voluble prose, a virgin grace which we have long lost in the artificial splendor of English diction. Here is no affectation of Chaucerian words: the gold is not spotted with rust. The vivid pictures of the poet, the curiosity of the antiquary, and, above all, a new model of policy of the practical politician, combine in this inestimable tract. Spenser suggested that the popular hero of that day, his noble friend the Earl of Essex, would be more able to conciliate popular favor in Ireland. By an alternate policy, from that day to the present, has our government tried to rule that fair "Land of Ire," either by a Lord Grey's severity of justice, — the Arthegal, accompanied by his "iron man" with his "iron flail;" or by the generous graciousness of an Earl of Essex, courting popularity: but neither would serve; the more quiet wisdom lay in colonization, happily begun, and so fatally neglected. The powerful eloquence of the poet and

the secretary attracted the queen's attention. She recommended Spenser to the Irish Council to be Sheriff of Cork; again was "the wight forlore" sent back to his undesired locality: yet now, perhaps, honors and promotion were awaiting the "miserable man." The royal letter was dated in September; and in the following month, suddenly, the Irish insurrection broke out. The flight of Spenser and his family from the Castle of Kilcolman was momentous: perhaps they witnessed the flames annihilating their small wealth. Spenser himself lost more than wealth: for the father beheld the sacrifice of his child; and the author was bereaved of all his manuscripts, now lost or scattered, — his hopes, his pride, and his fame! He flew to England, not to live, but to experience how this last stroke of fortune went beyond the force of his own passionate descriptions, or of his nature to endure. In an obscure lodging, and within three short months, the most sensitive of men, broken-hearted, closed his eyes in mute grief, and in a premature death. Spenser perished at the zenith of human life.

Curiosity has been excited to learn the occasion of the inveterate prejudice of an insensible lord-treasurer against a tender poet who had courted his favor. This hostility of "the mighty peer" seems not to have broken forth openly till the publication of the first three books of the "Faery Queen;" for all the poet's personal allusions to Burleigh were written shortly after that event.

Can so small a creature as a poet, when it creeps into the sphere of a jealous statesman's policy, draw on itself his hateful attention? Are crafty politicians in office like richly-laden travellers who start at a crossing shadow? Burleigh possessed the full confidence of his sovereign from her youth; but she was a woman subject to caprices, and would call her ancient friend and servant "an old fool." Burleigh was fearfully jealous of two potent rivals, — the Earl of Leicester and the Earl of Essex: these "men of arms," the patrons of Spenser, were

each subsequently the head of the opposition to the pacific administration of the lord-treasurer.

"The sage old sire," moreover, well knew the romantic self-idolatry of his royal mistress; her infirmity of poetical susceptibility; her avidity of poignant flatteries on her beauty, her chastity, and even on her verse. Her majesty was now in the ascension of that glorified beatitude, the "Faery Queen;" and this transfiguration was the work of him whom he held to be a creature of his great rivals!

We are interested to detect the vacillating conduct of the poet to the implacable statesman. Spenser accompanied his presentation-copy of the "Faery Queen" to the lord-treasurer with a sonnet, in which he humiliated the Muse before his great court-enemy:—

> "On whose mighty shoulders most doth rest
> The burden of this kingdom's government,
> Unfitly I these idle rimes present,
> The labor of lost time and wit unstayed."

If Spenser had complained of former cold neglect, now he had to endure, what a poet can never forgive, bitter disdain.

Wounded in spirit, the poet composed, immediately after the first appearance of the "Faery Queen," "the Ruins of Time:" there, eulogizing the departed Sir Francis Walsingham for his love of learning, and care of "men of arms," he launches forth a thunderbolt against the wary and frigid Burleigh:—

> "For he that now wields all things at his will
> Scorns one and the other in his deeper skill."

And he repeats the accusation in "Mother Hubbard's Tale:"—

> "Oh, grief of griefs! oh, gall of all good hearts!
> To see that virtue should despised be
> Of him that first was raised for vertuous parts;
> And now, broad-spreading like an aged tree,
> Lets none shoot up that nigh him planted be.
> Oh! let the man, by whom the Muse is scorned,
> Nor alive nor dead be of the Muse adorned."

We have, too, a more finished portrait of an evil *minister* who "lifted up his lofty towers," —

"That they begin to threat the neighbor sky;" —

in which, unquestionably, we find some of the deformities of Burleigh's political physiognomy.

"He no count made of nobility, —
The realm's chief strength, and girlond of the crown:
He made them dwell in darkness of disgrace;
For none but whom he list might come in place.
Of men of armes he had but small regard,
But kept them low, and strained very hard.
For men of learning little he esteemed:
His wisdome he above their learning deemed.
As for the rascal commons least he cared;
For not so common was his bounty shared.
'Let God,' said he, 'if please, care for the manie·
I for myself most care before else anie.'
Yet none durst speak, ne none durst of him plaine,
So great he was in grace, and rich through gaine."

The gentle bard of the "Faery Queen" now sate down to continue his great work; but, haunted by this spectral and iron-eyed monster of an unpatronizing minister, he actually violates the solemnity of his theme by opening with another recollection, so fatal to his own repose: —

"The rugged forehead, that, with grave foresight,
Welds kingdoms, causes, and affairs of state,
My looser rimes I wote doth sharply wite,
For praising love as I have done of late.
Such ones ill judge of love, that cannot love,
Ne in their frozen heart feel kindly flame."

But the minister could not banish him from the sovereign: —

"To such, therefore, I do not sing at all,
But to that sacred saint, my sovereign queen:
To her I sing of love, that loveth best,
And best is loved."

About the same time, Spenser had written "the Tears of the Muses," where, expressing a poet's wish that the royal palaces of Eliza should be filled with —

"Praises of divinest wits,
Who her eternize with their heavenly writs,"—

I suspect that Burleigh figures again among—

"The salvage brood,
Who, having been with acorns always fed,
Can no whit cherish this celestial food;
But with base thoughts are unto blindness led
And kept from looking on the lightsome day."

After these indignant effusions, Spenser, in proceeding with the "Faery Queen," tergiversated in his feelings. The poet had shadowed with some tenderness the calamities of the Scottish Mary, in the gentle characters of Amoret and Florizel. Yielding to political changes, the Queen of Scots is suddenly horribly transformed into the false Duessa. For the honor of the poet, we may concede that he partook of those party-passions which great statesmen know to raise up at will, and which never fail to influence contemporaries. Burleigh never paused till he laid the head of Mary on the block.* In the fifth book of the "Faery Queen," the poet has exhibited the trial of this state victim, and has made her sister-sovereign gracefully conceal tears which possibly were never shed; but who could expect that "the rugged forehead"—him whom he had denounced, that, "alive or dead," should by "the Muse be ever scorned"—should appear with all the dignity of wisdom?

"The sage old sire, that had to name
The kingdom's care, with a white silver head,
That many high regards and reasons 'gainst her read."

The poet did worse as he advanced in his work; for, in the

* I have been favored with the sight of several manuscript letters of Burleigh, in the possession of a gentleman in the neighborhood of Taunton, which relate to this critical period. They remarkably display the eager and remorseless decision of Burleigh. Messengers were sent off three or four times in a day, countermanding the former command, as the mind of Elizabeth vacillated, disconcerting the plans of the minister. The order 'to cut off her head" is given with the most revolting minuteness.

sixth book, he absolutely denies that it was his intention, in any of his "former writs," to reflect on "this mighty peer." To what "former writs" Spenser alludes is not clear. The matchless picture of the fruitless days of a court-expectant, in "Mother Hubbard's Tale," which many of my readers may have by heart, is supposed to have been represented to Lord Burleigh, by "backbiters," as a censure on him: it was an immortal one! and the application was easy.

It was after the appearance of the "Faery Queen," that Elizabeth, economical as were her bounties, sealed her delight by a permanent pension. Was it on this occasion that the remonstrance of the prudential lord-treasurer diminished by half its amount? "All this for a song!" exclaimed Burleigh. "Then give him what is reason," rejoined the queen. The words were remembered by the bard; but the royal command lay neglected at the exchequer. On a progress, Spenser reminded her majesty, by a petition, in the smallest space that ever suitor presented one, and in a style of which it was not easy to forget a word.* The lord-treasurer got reprimanded,

* This petition in rhyme is well known: —

"I was promised, on a time,
To have reason for my rhime:
From that time unto this season,
I received nor rhime nor reason."

Mr. Todd deems the anecdote apocryphal, because he can only retrace it to Fuller, who published it seventy years after the incident recorded, assigning no authority. Honest Fuller has, however, given a tolerable authority for such a sort of thing; namely, that it was "a story commonly *told* and *believed*." There could be no motive for any one to invent the circumstance and the pleasantry, gratuitously to ascribe it to the poet. Mr. Todd is pleased to call "the numbers magical," and decides on this "ridiculous memorial," — a criticism fatal to all the playfulness of genius. Were the "rhimes" not good enough for the nonce? and "the reason" amusingly convenient to be remembered?

The anecdote is only deficient in its date, and possibly may relate to some former donation before the pension was fixed. Edward Phillips gives the large sum of five hundred pounds, — another version of the same story; and he wrote about the same time. What remains inexplicable is, that this pen-

and the poet present payment. We cannot avoid associating the anecdote with these lines:—

> "To have thy prince's grace, yet want her peer's;
> To have thy asking, yet wait many years."

We may now close with Burleigh; but much remains to be developed in the fortunes of a court-suitor, as we trace them in the history of our Spenser. The coldness of the lord-treasurer may not have been the only cause of the poet's deep and constant laments. The sojourner in the circle of a court may be mortified not only by its repulse or its neglect, but also by the capricious favor of his patron. A devotion of service may provoke offence, whether it be from zeal too improvident, from officiousness too busy, or from an ingenuousness too open. He is thrown into a position in which he must preserve silence, and cannot always hope for pardon.

One incident of this nature deeply affected our poet in his intercourse with Lord Leicester. We only discover it by a remarkable dedicatory sonnet to his translation of Virgil's "Gnat." Had the poet not decided that the mysterious tale should reach posterity, he would not have published the sonnet several years after it was composed; for it is dedicated "to the deceased lord"! The poet has energetically described the delicacy and difficulty of the position into which he had been cast:—

> "*Wronged, yet not daring to express my pain*
> To you, good lord! the causer of my care,
> In cloudy tears my case *I thus complain*
> *Unto yourself, that only privy are.*
> But if that any Œdipus, unware,
> Shall chance, through power of some divining spright,
> To read *the secret of this riddle rare,*

---

sion to Spenser seems to have been wholly unknown to his contemporaries — to Camden and to others — who wrote subsequently. The grant of this pension was only discovered a few years ago in the Chapel of the Rolls. The pension was only for fifty pounds; but the value of money makes the royal gift more decent than at first it would seem.

And know the purport of my evil plight;
Let him rest pleased with his own insight,
Ne further seek to gloze upon the text:
But grief enough it is to grieved wight,
To feel his fault, and not be further vext.
But what so by myself may not be shown,
May by this gnat's complaint be easily known."

The gnat of Virgil, observing a serpent in the act of darting on a sleeping swain, stings the eye of the sleeper: starting at the pain, the disturbed man crushes the gnat; but, thus awakened, he saves himself from the crested serpent. The poem turns on the remonstrance of the ghost of the gnat; which had no other means than by inflicting its friendly sting to warn him of his peril who had thus hastily deprived it of its own innocent existence. What was "the serpent," and why the poet was hardly used as "the gnat," and why he was —

"Wronged, yet not daring to express his pain," —

and yet "grieved to feel *his fault*," is "a riddle rare," supposed to require some Œdipus of secret history to solve. The moral is obvious. The character of the royal favorite may give rise to many suggestions; but, if I may venture a conjecture on what the parties themselves "were only privy to," Spenser had touched on some high matter, where his affectionate zeal, however sagacious, on this occasion hurt the pride of Leicester, too haughty or too mortified to be lessoned by his familiar dependant, who, like the gnat, found that his timely warning was "his fault."

A sage of the antiquarian school imagined that he could solve the enigma of Spenser's sorrows, by arranging, with dates, and accounts of salaries, the official situations which the poet held. To remove the odium attached to Burleigh's prepossessions against the poet, he assumes, that, without the lord-treasurer's consent, Spenser could not have received his lands or his pensions. But the royal grant of the forfeited lands was obviously the reward for his conduct, suggested by those under

whose eye he had served: the patronage of Sidney and the Lords Leicester and Grey may be imagined to have greatly outweighed any cavils of Burleigh. George Chalmers infers that all the complaints of the poet are "too highly colored, *if they really were complaints respecting himself;*" and concludes that all the poet's querulousness must be ascribed, not to Burleigh, but to the Irish Rebellion. But the calamity of the Irish Rebellion occasioned no complaints from the poet,—only his death! for we have not a line by Spenser during the short interval which elapsed between his flight from Ireland and his decease in London.

It was not by an estimate of salaries and an arrangement of dates, which yield no result, but by a statement of feelings, in which the "secret sorrows" of Spenser lie concealed, that we can decide on the real source of his continued complaints. The poet must be judged by the habits of his mind, and by those interior conflicts which are often unconnected with those external circumstances open to common observers. Of all the tuneful train, Spenser was the most poetical in the gentlest attributes of the poet. That robust force which the enterprise of active life demands was not lodged in that soul of tenderness; and worldly cares, like that cancer in the breast which the sufferer hides from others, dejected the fancy which at all times was working ceaselessly among its bright creations. His vein was inexhaustible; and we have lost, perhaps, more than we possess of his writings. The author of "the Faery Queen" required, above all things, leisure and the muse. His first steppings into life were auspicious. To Sir Philip Sidney he had opened the first cantos of his romantic epic: the catastrophe of that poet-hero made our poet a mourner all his days. There was no substitute for a congenial patron: all other patrons could be but the very statues of patronage, cold representatives of the departed, but no longer the bosom companion of the poet's thoughts, and the generous arbiter of his fortunes.

In his last days, Spenser has not dropped even one "melodious tear;" but he was wept by his brothers the poets, who held his pall, and bestrewed his hearse with their elegies, and beheld in the fate of their great master their own. And thus truly, though ambiguously, Phineas Fletcher described his destiny: —

"Poorly, poor man! he lived; poorly, poor man! he died."

So many living details of that golden bondage into which our poet was thrown, from his earliest to his latter days, discover the real source of his "secret sorrows," — his unceasing and vain solicitation at court, the suitor of so many patrons: the *res angusta domi* perpetually pressed on the morbid imagination of the fortuneless man.

I know of no satire aimed at SPENSER; a singular fate for a great poet: even "satyric Nash" revered the character of the author of "the Faery Queen." I have often thought, that, among the numerous critics of SPENSER, the truest was his keen and witty contemporary; for this town-wit has stamped all our poet's excellences by one felicitous word,—"HEAVENLY SPENSER."

THE FAERY QUEEN.

SPENSER, the courtly spectator of the tilt, the pageant, and the mask,—musing over the tome of old Gothic romances, and striking into the vein of fabling of Italian poesy, whose novelty had nearly supplanted the ancient classics,—was at once ARIOSTO and TASSO and OVID.

SPENSER composed with great facility: incessant production seems to have been his true existence. His was one of those minds whose labor diffuses their delight, and whose delight provokes to labor. He seems always to be in earnest, and sometimes in haste; for he had much to work. While composing the "Faery Queen," he had that concurrent poem of the regal Arthur, of no inferior *calibre*, ever in his mind. The "Faery Queen" would have contained, had it been completed, not much under a hundred thousand verses. The "Iliad" does not exceed fifteen. He seems to have been satisfied with his first unblotted thoughts. He has defects which might have proved fatal to an ordinary versifier; but his voluminous vein lies protected by his genius.

The artificial complexity of his nine-lined stanza put him to many shifts; he exercised arbitrary power in shortening words or lengthening syllables; and hardily invented novel terminations to common words, to provide his multiplicity of rhymes: he falsified accentuation, to adapt it to his metre; and violated the orthography, to adjust the rhyme: he dilated his thoughts to fill up the measure of his stanza; and we are too often reminded of the hammering of the chain. The first book of the "Faery Queen," when the difficulties of

this novel stanza must have been most arduous, is necessarily composed with most care; and, both for subject and execution, is of itself a complete poem. As Spenser acquired facility and dexterity, his pen winged its flight through the prescribed labyrinth of sweet sounds.

His exquisite ear had felt the melody of the vowelly and voluble stanza of Italy; and to which he even added a grace of his own by a new measure, in the Alexandrine close. This verse had been introduced by Sir Thomas Wyatt with no great effect: it was adroitly adopted by Spenser to give a full cadence to his stanza. Dryden, in its occasional use, professedly derived it from Spenser, and seems to have carried away the honor, when Pope, in exemplifying its solemn effect, ascribes it to the latter poet, who, he tells us, had taught —

"The full-resounding line,
The long majestic march, and energy divine."

The inanity of that race —

"Of gentlemen who wrote with ease," —

and made such free use of "the full-resounding line," void of all thought, only betrayed their barrenness by this additional extension of their weakness. Hence it incurred the partial censure of our great poetical critic, as "a needless Alexandrine," —

"That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along."

But the soul of melody lies hidden in the musician's instrument; and the Spenserian stanza, to be felt, must find its echo in the ear of the reader. A master in the art of versification was struck by our poet's modulation, so musical was his ear in the rhythm of his verse. He remarked this in those two delicious pieces, — "the Prothalamion," a spousal hymn on the double marriage of two ladies, personated as two swans in these harmonious lines, —

"Two swans of goodly hue
Came softly swimming down along the Lee;" * —

and "the Epithalamium" on the poet's own nuptials, or, as the poet notes, —

"Song made in lieu of many ornaments
With which my love should duely have been decked."

One feature in Spenser's versification seems to have escaped notice, although Warton has expressly written a dissertation on that subject. It is Spenser's discreet use of *alliteration:* never obtrusive, but falling naturally into the verse, it may escape our perception while it is acting on our feeling. Unconsciously or by habit, his ear became the echo of his imagination: sound was the response of thought, and, as much as his epithets, scattered the "orient hues" of his fancy. Alliteration and epithets, which with mechanical versificators are a mere artifice, because only an artifice, and glare and glitter, charm by their consonance when they rise out of the emotions of the true poet.†

Some persons have been deterred from venturing on the "Faery Queen" from a notion that the style had rusted with

* The Lee is the stream.

† I offer some instances of alliteration; but the beauty of such lines can only be rightly judged by the context: —

"In woods, in waves, in wars, she wonts to dwell;
And will be found with peril and with pain."

"Such as a lamp whose life does fade away,
Or as the moon cloathed with cloudy night."

"A world of waters,
Horrible, hideous, roaring with hoarse cry."

"They cherelie chaunt, and rymes at random flung,
The fruitful spawn of their rank fantasies:
They feed the ears of fools with flattery."

"All the day, before the sunny rays,
He used to slug or sleep, in slothful shade."

"Unpitied, unplagued, of foe or friend."

"And with sharp shrilling shriek do bootless cry."

"Did stand astonished at his curious skill,
With hungry ears to hear his harmony."

time, and is as obsolete as chivalry itself. This popular prejudice has been fostered by an opinion of Ben Jonson, which probably referred chiefly to "the Shepherd's Calendar," where Spenser had adopted a system of Chaucerian words, which to us is more curious than fortunate, and which, on the first publication, required a glossary. This system he abandoned in his romantic epic: but he loved to sprinkle some remaining graces of antiquity, some *naïve* expressions, or some picturesque words; and his modern imitators, amid their elaborate pomp, have felt the secret charm, and have mottled their Spenserian stanza with these archaisms.

Of all poets, SPENSER excelled in the pictorial faculty. His circumstantial descriptions are minute, yet vivid. They are, indeed, exuberant; for he loved not to quit his work while he could bring the object closer to the eye. This diffusion, flowing with the melody of his verse, often raises the illusion of revery, till we seem startled by reality, and we appear to have beheld what only we have been told.* Poet of poets! SPENSER made a poet at once of COWLEY, and

* Spenser has suffered a criticism from Mr. Campbell, who, a great poet himself, has otherwise done ample justice to his ancient master. "It must certainly be owned, that, in description, he exhibits nothing of the *brief strokes* and *robust power* which characterize the *very greatest poets*." Certain it is, Spenser is rarely "brief and robust;" but contrary natures cannot operate in the same genius. If Spenser rarely shows the strength and brevity of "the very greatest poets," so may it be said that "the very greatest poets" rarely rival the charm of his diffusion; or, as Mr. Campbell himself attests, in "verse more magnificently descriptive." But the voice of Poetry is more potent than its criticism; and truly says Mr. Campbell, "We shall nowhere find more airy and expansive images of visionary things, a sweeter tone of sentiment, or a finer flush in the color of language, than in this RUBENS OF ENGLISH POETRY."

Twining was a scholar, deeply versed in classical lore, which he has shown to great advantage in his "Version of and Commentary on Aristotle's Treatise of Poetry." In his Dissertations "On Poetical and Musical Imitation" prefixed to this work, our critic is quite at home with Pope and Goldsmith; but he seems wholly shut out from Spenser! In a note to his first Dissertation, he tells us "the following stanza of SPENSER has been much admired:"—

once lent an elegant simplicity to THOMSON. GRAY was accustomed to open Spenser when he would frame —

"Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn;"

and MILTON, who owned Spenser to have been his master as well as his predecessor, lingered amid his musings, and, with many a Spenserian image, touched into perfection his own sublimity.

In associating the name of SPENSER with MILTON and GRAY, we are reminded of the distinctness of his poetic

"The joyous birds shrouded in cheareful shade,
Their notes unto the voice attempred sweet;
The angelical soft trembling voices made
To the instruments divine respondence meet;
The silver-sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmurs of the waters-fall;
The waters-fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call;
The gentle-warbling wind low answered to all.[1]

Our critic observes that Dr. Warton says of these lines, that "they are of themselves a complete concert of the most delicious music." Indeed, this very stanza in Spenser has been celebrated long before Joseph Warton wrote, and often since. Now listen to our learned Twining: —

"It is unwillingly that I differ from a person of so much taste. I cannot consider as music, much less as 'delicious music,' a mixture of incompatible sounds, — of sounds musical with sounds unmusical. The singing of birds cannot possibly be 'attempered' to the notes of a human voice. The mixture is, and must be, disagreeable. To a person listening to a concert of voices and instruments, the interruption of singing-birds, wind, and waterfalls, would be little better than the torment of Hogarth's enraged musician. Further, the description itself is, like too many of Spenser's, coldly elaborate, and indiscriminately minute. Of the expressions, some are feeble and without effect, as 'joyous birds;' some evidently improper, as 'trembling voices' and 'cheerful shades,' — for there cannot be a greater fault in a voice than to be tremulous, and cheerful is surely an unhappy epithet applied to shade; some cold and labored, and such as betray too plainly the necessities of rhyme, — such is —

'The waters-fall with difference discreet.'"

Such is the anti-poetical and technical criticism! Imagine a music-master, who had never read a line of poetry, attempting to perform the

[1] "The Faery Queen," book ii. canto xii. st. 71.

faculty, and the difference of his personal character. Spenser, tender, elegant, and fanciful, rarely participated in their condensed energies, or the severity of their greatness: the personal character of our courtly poet was moulded by his position in society.

When we float along the stream of his melodious song, conscious only of its beauty, we do not often pause at elevations which raise the feeling of the sublime. Such daring visions, when they do rise on us, rather indicate the power of his genius than the habit of his mind. Our gentle Spenser was often satisfied with rivalling without surpassing his originals, which Milton and Gray ever did when they copied. It seems, therefore, unreasonable to assert that Spenser has combined the daring sternness of Dante with the wild fantasy of Goethe.

"delicious music" of our poet; or a singing-master, who had never heard a "joyous bird," tuning up some fair pupil's "trembling voice,"—and we might have expected this criticism from such "enraged musicians"! Would our critic insist on having a philharmonic concert or a simple sonata?—he who will not suffer birds to be "joyous," nor "the shade cheerful," which their notes make so.

> "The angelical soft trembling voices made
> To the instruments divine respondence meet,"—

the "softness trembling" with the verse: had our critic forgotten Strada's famed contest of the nightingale with the lyre of the poet, when, her "trembling voice" overcome in the rivalry, she fell on the strings to die? And what shall we think of the classical critic who has pronounced that "the descriptions of Spenser are coldly elaborate,"—the most vivid and splendid of our poetry?

But the most curious part remains to be told. This fine stanza of Spenser is one of his free borrowings; being a translation of a stanza in Tasso,[1] excepting the introduction of "the silver-sounding instruments." The Æolian harp played on by the musical winds was a happiness reserved for Thomson. The felicitous copy of Spenser attracted Fairfax, who, when he came to the passage in Tasso, kept his eye on Spenser, and has carefully retained "the joyous birds" for the *vezzosi augelli* of the original.

It is certain, that, without poetic sensibility, the most learned critic will ever find that the utmost force of his logic in these matters will not lead to reason, but to unreason. Imagination only can decide on imagination.

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[1] "Gerusalemme Liberata," canto xvi. st. 12.

Yet their lofty creations have not gone beyond those of Spenser's personifications of Despair; of Fear; of Confusion; of Astonishment; of laborious Care, — that workman in his smithy, living amid the unceasing strokes of his perpetual hammers; or of Jealousy, from a mortal man metamorphosed with Ovidean fancy: his single eye, for he had long worn out the other, never could be closed; no slumber could press down those restless lids; tenant of a cavern, listening day and night to the roaring billows incessantly beating his abode, threatening with its huge ruins to fall on the wretch wasting in self-torments, till, nothing left of him, he vanished into a flitting aery sprite, —

> "Forgot he was a man, and JEALOUSY is hight." *

There are two sublime descriptions of NIGHT, which may be read together. In the one she is the —

> "Sister of heavie Death, and nurse of Woes!"

and elsewhere she appears as —

> "That most ancient Grandmother of all, —
> Older than Jove."

NIGHT, befriending Deceit and Shame, takes one of their daughters, the witch Duessa, in her "pitchy mantle." Yoking her coal-black steeds to her iron wagon, they penetrate to the inferior regions, bearing a mortal caitiff to be *restored* to this wicked life: "the messenger of death" passing over the earth, the screeching owl, the baying dogs, the howling wolf, warn of the witch's presence; and in hell the trembling ghosts stand —

> "Chattering with iron teeth, and staring wide
> With stonie eyes; and flocked on every side
> To gaze on EARTHLY WIGHT that with the NIGHT durst ride." †

The sublime fragment on "Mutability," where Nature is

* "The Faery Queen," book iii. canto x.
† "The Faery Queen," b. iii. canto iv. st. 65, and b. i. canto v. st. 20.

viewed seated mysteriously amid the creation, has not been excelled by the most philosophical poets.

> "Great Nature ever young, yet full of eld,
> Still moving, yet immoved from her sted;
> Unseen of any, yet of all beheld,
> Thus sitting on her throne."

If such noble inventions appear rare, it perhaps is owing to the wide extent of the "faery land," as well as to the poet's proneness to luxuriance of diction. If from that voluminous inspiration the poet has sometimes trespassed on the critic's bourn, or the romantic eulogist of chastity itself has sometimes violated his own virgin page,—for Spenser, always imitative, caught a slight infection from his old romancers and his Italian favorites,—all this exuberance bears fruit: freedom and force will ever interest the artists of poetry.

Whoever has passed into the house of Pride,—

> "Whose walls were high, but nothing strong nor thick,"—

and marked her on her progress, "drawn by six unequal beasts," with her vile counsellors in their wicked gradation; or has entered "the ancient house of Holiness;" or counted, in the den of Riches,—

> "The huge great iron chests and coffers strong,"—

amid the dead men's bones scattered around those chests and coffers,—has realized the marvellous architecture of Fancy; or whoever, roving with the Muse of Spenser through all her localities, meets the sylvan men whom the chaste Una governed, or the satyrs whom the frail Hellenore would not quit; or, when that Muse unveils her voluptuous charms, listens to her song in the enchanted gardens of Armida; or, in the approach to Acrasia in the bower of Bliss, starts at the nymphs wantonly wrestling in the glassy waters, laughing and blushing; or more innocently gazes on the gorgeous Mask of Cupid, or the dance of the poet and mistress among the Graces,—finds all endowed with poetic existences, unchange-

able in their nature amid the changes of taste, so long as imagination shall seek for its delights, and genius for the language of its emotions.

"The Faery Queen" was designed by its author to consist of twelve books; six of which we only possess, published at two several times, and a fragment of another. The subject of each book is a moral attribute, — Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy. Each attribute is personified by a knight-errant, with all the passions of bodily mortality.

The plan of the poem is so inartificial, that the twelve books, had it been completed, could only have formed twelve separate poems: our poet followed the free and fertile way of Ariosto. The introduction of Prince Arthur may have been designed to give a sort of unity to the incoherent twelve knights, who would have been finally led under his auspices to the court of the Faery Queen; but as the prince, however respectable in romance, comes and vanishes, does nothing, and says little, we incline to the humor of the editor, Hughes, that "the prince is here seen only in his minority, performing his exercises in Fairyland as a *private gentleman*." The versatile plan was adapted to the genius of the poet: the ductility of his invention, the luxuriance of his imagination, and the never-ceasing flow of his mellifluous stanza, would have suffered constraint and mutilation, bound by prescribed forms, and modelled by the classical epic. At the period that the poet Hughes published his edition* of Spenser, our editors and critics were little conversant with the Elizabethan literature; nor had the taste of the learned emancipated itself from the established form of the epic of antiquity. But Hughes was alive to the vital poetry before him, though evidently perplexed to fix on a criterion, or to specify the class of poetry, for "the Faery Queen." His excellent judgment

* This edition of 1715, from its modernized orthography, and from greater freedoms taken with the text, is valueless.

struck into a new and right path. He describes it as "a poem of a particular kind;" and, in his "Remarks on the Faery Queen," he had the merit of distinguishing poetry, like architecture, into its Gothic origin, as well as its classical. This was a discovery at that period; and subsequent critics, such as Bishop Hurd, and more recently Schlegel, have run away with the honor by their more ample development of the romantic school. Hughes was hardly aware of the importance of this division; for his discovery amounts to little more than one of those first thoughts, which have not ripened into a principle.

"The Faery Queen" was the last great work modelled on chivalry. Awakening from the gloom of the theological contests of Edward and Mary, the court of the Maiden Queen, from state-policy and her own disposition, had been transformed into a court of romance. Glory was the cheap but inappreciable meed bestowed by the economical sovereign; and love was the language to which the female from the throne could bend to listen to her subject.

Elizabeth, stately and tender, was herself "the Faery Queen," without even the poet's flattery, when seated under the dais, amid long galleries hung with cloth of gold or silver, and all the moving tilt-yard glittering in its shine; "the noise of music," and the sound of shields; the solemn procession, and gay crowd of the many-colored liveries; the tasselled caparisons of the horses, and the nodding plumes of the knights. There our poet fed his eyes on the pageant, enchanting by its scenical allegory: as when four noble challengers approached, — the children of DESIRE, — attempting to win the fortress of BEAUTY; that is, Whitehall and her majesty!* They stand in a car, "shadowed with white and carnation silk, being the colors of Desire." But the challengers must yield to Beauty, whose princely voice is their ample

* This famous tourney may be viewed in Holinshed, — "England," 1317, fo. The four illustrious challengers were the Earl of Arundel, Lord Windsor, Sir Fulke Greville, and Sir Philip Sidney.

guerdon; and on the following day were the tourney and the barriers "courageously tried." Thus were the days of chivalry, in its forms or its "fopperies," restored by the Faery Queen; and, with such festivals, SPENSER nursed his gorgeous fancy, and the queen was the true inspirer of his romantic epic.

Warton and Hurd observe that Spenser copied real *manners of his time* as much as Homer. We must here distinguish an essential difference, if Homer really represented the manners of the heroic age. It is true, that much of the *manners* and forms of chivalry prevailed among the courtiers of Elizabeth; but such *adventures* of chivalry as Spenser has described in his singular poem were transplanted from the ancient romances. The *incidents* are therefore not of the poet's age; and we can only read his narrative as the last of the romances.

The old romance of "La Morte d'Arthur" was still the fashionable reading of the court; nor had the gorgeous enchantments of Stephen Hawes yet vanished, for a new edition had issued in 1555. Spenser had read Hawes; and, however entranced by the pageantry of the fiction, from the uncouth stanza of "the Pastime of Pleasure" he may have been led to the construction of the Spenserian; for it is one of the aptitudes of true genius to carry to perfection what it finds imperfect.

"The Faery Queen" was produced at a crisis of transition when the old romantic way was departing, notwithstanding the temporary influence of a courtly revival, and the new had not yet arrived. The whole machinery of Gothic invention could hardly be worked: its marvels had ceased to be wondrous, and began to be ridiculed. The fantastic extravagance of the ordinary writers of fiction — that crowd of poet-apes which always rise after a great work has appeared — has been censured by the two great literary satirists of that day, MARSTON and HALL: Hall, indeed, suddenly checks his

censorial temerity in blaming themes made sacred by the Faery Muse.

> "Let no rebel satire dare traduce
> The eternal legends of thy fairy Muse,
> Renowned SPENSER! whom no earthly wight
> Dares once to emulate."

The compliment to Spenser does not diminish the satire levelled at the class.

Contemporary satirists furnish a precise date when ancient things are on the turn, and getting out of fashion: they are the first, who, like hawks, descend on their quarry.

If Spenser attempted to infuse a rejuvenescence into the dry veins of the old age of romance by the vitality of *Allegory*, he has fallen into a great error; for his twelve knight-errants do not interest our sympathies the more for being twelve wandering virtues. Allegorical poetry, not long after his day, also declined; and when it was resumed by PHINEAS FLETCHER in what he has fantastically named and described as "the Purple Island," or "the little ISLE OF MAN," the poetry can hardly preserve itself amid the ludicrous analogies which, with such ingenious perversity of taste, are struck out between anatomy and poesy, too many not very agreeable to recollect.

CHIVALRY and ALLEGORY, two columns of our poet's renown, thus soon gave way; and SPENSER has often suffered the heaviest penalty to which a great poet was ever condemned, — neglect!

But these infelicitous forms, which disguised the most tender and imaginative genius, could not deprive it of its "better parts." Spenser still remained the poet among poets themselves; though for the world at large, indeed, Spenser seemed to be recognized only as a poet in the chronology of poetry. A critic of great delicacy, and a votary of "the Gothic school," despaired for the destiny of our poet. "The Faery Queen," exclaimed HURD in the agony of his taste, "one of

the noblest productions of modern poetry, is fallen into so general a neglect, that all the zeal of the commentators is esteemed officious and impertinent, and will never restore it to those honors which it has, once for all, irrecoverably lost."

This sharp lament broke out in 1760, when, only two years before, the two rival editions of CHURCH and UPTON had simultaneously appeared; and the latter could at least boast both of the novelty and the curiosity of its commentary. But literary commentators held forth few attractions to the incurious readers of that day. More than thirty years have now elapsed since the last classical edition of Spenser's works. But at no period was Spenser ever forgotten by poetical recluses; and professed imitations of our poet in modern times, though they may not always be Spenserian, have never ceased, from Shenstone to Mickle, and from Beattie to Byron.

ALLEGORY.

ALLEGORY, and its exposition of what is termed the double or secret sense, is a topic on more than one account important. The mystical art of types and symbols has given rise to some extraordinary abuses, and even to artifices, which may be considered as an imposture practised on the human understanding. An extended fictitious narrative, constructed on the principle of one continued allegory, is a topic which critical learning has not expressly treated on. An allegorical epic never occured to the ancient legislator of poetry; and modern critics have consented to define ALLEGORY as "that art in which one thing is *related*, and another *understood*."

But it has been subsequently discovered that this definition was too narrow to comprehend the multiform shapes which allegory assumes, either in the subtility or the grossness of its nature.

Licentious commentators have rioted in their presumed discoveries by extorting from the apparent meaning a hidden sense, or by typical adumbrations wresting allusions to persons or circumstances. The genius of allegory has triumphed from an extended metaphor to a whole poem itself; and its chimerical results have often resembled the metamorphoses of Ovid, turning every object into an altered shape, and making two objects, wholly unconnected, appear to rise out of each other. We may show from the success of many of these pretended revelations, that the difficulty has not always been so great as the absurdity.

A prevalent folly has usually some parent-origin; and the present one of ALLEGORY may have been an ancient one. The learned have sought for the source of allegory in the night of Egyptian darkness, among their hieroglyphics. That curious tale of antiquity which Herodotus has preserved shows us all the obscurity and the inconvenience of allegorical communication in its ambidextrous nature. The four symbols — of the arrows, the bird, the mouse, and the frog, which the Scythian ambassadors silently presented to Darius on his invasion of their deserts — were an allegory; and, like many allegories, this emblematical embassy admitted of contrary interpretations. This enigmatic humor of the Egyptian learning seems to have been caught by the emblematical Greeks. The priesthood, eager to save the divinity of their whole theogony from the popular traditions and poetical impieties of that bible of the Polytheists, the "Iliad," opened the secret or double sense of Homer. They maintained that the Homeric fables were nothing less than an allegory, shadowing forth the mysteries of nature, and veiling an arcanum of the sciences physical and moral. And these elucidators of speculative obscurities formed a sect under the lower Platonists.* The fathers were perfect children in their ridiculous allegories, and they allegorized the Old Testament throughout; and assuredly the rabbins did not yield in puerility to the fathers. But all these were on topics too solemn to enter into our present inquiry.

We may, however, smile when we discover this race of Œdipuses among the *romanzatori*, or the publishers of the ancient romances. With solemn effrontery, these proceeded on the principle of allegory to dignify their light and lying volumes, either to renovate the satiated curiosity of their readers, to cover the freedom of their prurient incidents, or to

* We have a collection of these "Allegoricæ Homericæ." Even the great Verulam caught the infectious ingenuity, and, in "the Wisdom of the Ancients," explains every thing with the skill of a great Homeric scholiast.

tolerate their marvellous fantasies. The editor of "Amadis of Gaul" revealed a secret yet untold. The common reader hitherto had never strayed beyond the literal sense: but he was now informed that he had only culled the most perishable flowers; for the more elevated mind were reserved the perennial fruits of a mystical interpretation of the occult sense. It was in this way that the famous "Romaunt of the Rose," from a mere love-story and a general satire on society, was converted into a volume of theology, of politics, of ethics, and even of the *grand œuvre* of the alchemists. Such inchoate mysteries were told under "the rose"! The most ludicrous display of their literary imposture may be seen in that collection of popular tales called the "Gesta Romanorum." Every tale is accompanied by the gloss of a pious allegorist. An "emperor," or "Pompey the Great," is a frequent personage in these tales, and is always the type of "our heavenly Father," or "the soul," or "the Saviour;" while "Contes à la Fontaine," however licentious, pass through a moralization by the puritanical cant of hypocritical monkery.

Conforming to the spurious piety of this monkish taste, a voluminous commentary expounded the morality of the ravishing versatilities of Ariosto. Berni gravely assured us that all the marvels of enchanted gardens, voluminous dragons, sylvan savages, and monsters with human faces, were only thrown out for the amusement of the ignorant; and concludes with these memorable lines, which he freely borrowed from the father of Italian poesy:—

> "Ma voi ch'avete gl'intelletti sani,
> Mirate la dottrina che s'asconde,
> Sotto queste coperte alte e profonde!" *

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* Berni's "Bojardo," canto xxxi. st. 2. He has hardly improved the verse in the "Inferno," canto ix. ver. 61:—

> "O voi ch'avete gl'intelletti sani,
> Mirate la dottrina che s'asconde,
> *Sotto il velame degli versi strani.*"

"But ye of sounder intellect admire the wisdom hidden under these coverings, high and profound!" A strain so solemn and melodious was not the least exquisite pleasantry from a burlesque satirist!

Camoens having adopted the Grecian mythology in his Christian epic, recourse was had to a mystic allegory to defend the incongruity. When Vasco de Gama and his companions sport with Thetis and her nymphs, allegorically, though in good earnest, some Portuguese commentator has explained how "these fantastic amours signify the *wild sects* of different enthusiasts in the most rational institutions, which, however contrary to each other, all agree in deriving their authority from the same source." To such ineptitudes are the allegorists sometimes driven, from the sickly taste of gratifying the infirmity of readers by cloaking their freest inventions in the garb of piety and morality. Thus the popular literature of Europe was overrun by these adumbrations. Even Milton echoed the occult doctrine which he had caught from the seers of the old *romanzatori*,—those Gothic Homers in whose spells he had been bound:—

> "Forests and enchantments drear,
> *Where more is meant than meets the ear.*"

While this mania of allegorizing fictitious narratives was in vogue, a remarkable occurrence, had it been publicly known, might have let the initiated into a secret more "high and profound" than any of their esoteric revelations, and might have exposed the imposture which had been so long practised on their simplicity. The hapless Tasso was harassed by a most "stiff-necked" generation of "the learned Romans," as he calls the classicists,—a mob of *signori*, of mechanical critics, protesting against his potent inventions.

> "Magnanima Mensogna, hor quando è il vero
> Si bello che si posse à te preporre."

The forest incantations of Ismen and the enchantments of Armida, those true creations of Gothic romance, were on the

point of utter perdition. In this extremity, the poet decided to have recourse to the prevalent folly of fitting an allegory to his epic. He acknowledges to his confidential friend that the whole was only designed to humor the times, and begs that he may not be laughed at. "I will act the profound, and show that I have a deep political purpose;" and he might have added a whole system of ethics which has been extorted from the presumed allegory. "Under this shield," he proceeds, "I shall endeavor to protect the *loves* and the *enchantments*," — those golden leaves which the furious classicists would have torn out of his romantic epic. By this singular fact we are led to this important discovery, that to allegorize is no difficult affair; for the present allegory was "the work of a single morning!"*

Tasso's confession is a perpetual demonstration of *the fallacies of allegory*. We must wholly rid ourselves of "gl'intelletti sani," if we doubt that the original writers who have been so largely allegorized ever composed an extended fictitious narrative but in all the freedom of invention, in open daylight, and never seeking to hide nature in secret coverts.

If, as we see, an allegory may be ingeniously drawn from a work which never was allegorical; so, when an allegory seems designed, its secret application is usually the forlorn hope of literature, since the most subtile conjectures on these enigmas have wholly differed from each other.

Persons and incidents in an allegorical fiction are noses of

* The "Allegoria dalla Poema" is appended to the ancient editions of Tasso's "Gerusalemme Liberata." The one before me is dated Ferrara, 1582. I believe it has been indignantly rejected by modern editors. When we detect Tasso seriously describing Godfrey as the type of the human understanding, Rinaldo and Tancred and others as different faculties of the soul, and the common soldiers as the body of man, we regret that an honorable mind should degrade itself by such literary imposture. At length, having succeeded in imposing on others, he attempted to impose on himself; for he actually commenced a second "Jerusalem" on the allegorical system, and did not more happily succeed in his elder days than our Akenside in his philosophical destruction of his youthful poem.

wax, ever to be shaped by a more adroit finger. But, in a lengthened allegory, the ground is often shifted: the allegorister tires of his allegory, and at length means what he says, and nothing more. This has driven the expounders of the double sense into the absurdity of explaining an identical object, sometimes in a metaphysical, and at others in a material sense: they take up what their fancy requires, and cautiously drop what would place them in an inextricable position.

DANTE opened his great work in the darkness of an allegory; but how the erratic commentators have lost their way in "Le tenebre della Divina Commedia"! What are the three allegorical animals which open "the Vision"? The double sense remains inexplicable from its abundant explanations. Are these animal personifications of three great passions? Is the gay panther the type of luxurious pleasure; the lion, of ambition; the she-wolf, of avarice? But what if the spotted panther should be the representative of Dante's own Florence, and its spots indicate the Neri and the Bianchi factions? The hungry lion, with its lofty head, would then be superb France; and the lean she-wolf, never satiate, be devouring Rome. Yet a later revelation from Niebuhr, according to his Platonic ideas, sees but three metaphysical beings, — the types of the soul, the understanding, and the senses. Should some future allegorister discover, by his historical, political, and ethical fancies, that the three animals were designed, one for a wavering and maculated Ghibelline, and the others for the resolute papal Guelphs, the probability would be much the same. In truth, we can afford but small confidence to these expounders of the double sense; for when Jean Molinet allegorized the "Roman de la Rose," and illustrated it by historical appliances, as chronology was rarely consulted in his day, it appears that this good canon of Valenciennes had allegorized in reference to persons who flourished and events which occurred posterior to the time of the writers.

In the instances which we have indicated, such as in Ariosto and Tasso, it was the commentator who had indulged his allegorical genius, not the original writers themselves. With one of our great poets, unhappily, the case is reversed: the poetic character and destiny of Spenser stand connected with allegory; for here the poet himself prematurely *meditated on his allegory before he invented his fiction.* The difference is immense. SPENSER fell a victim to this phantom of the poetic creed of his day. Deeming a mystic allegory a novel spirit in poesy, he who was to run the glorious career of Faeryland first forged the brazen bonds which he could never shake off. His invention was made subordinate to a prescribed system. The poet was continually running after the allegory, which he did not always care to recover in the exuberance of his imagination, and the copious facility of his stanzas. Often must he have deprived his twelve knights-errant of their tangible humanity, perpetually relapsing into their metaphysical nonentities, — Sir Guyon into temperance, Arthegal into justice, and Sir Caladore into courtesy!

Yet this is not the sole defect of the allegorical character of the "Faery Queen." We may suspect, that, when SPENSER decided on constructing an allegorical poem, he had not any settled notions of the artifice of types, nor yet of the subjects to be symbolized; of fictions which were to conceal truths, and of truths which might be mistaken for fictions. A strange confusion often prevails in his system, sometimes ambiguous, sometimes contradictory, whenever the allegory loses itself in what is not allegorical, or the reality is as suddenly lost amid the mystical fancies.

The poet himself announced that the "Faery Queen" was "a continued allegory or dark conceit;" and he was so strongly convinced that "all allegories are doubtfully construed," that he determined to expound his own text regarding a most eminent personage; but this was merely to secure a courtly eulogy on a royal patroness. "In the 'Faerie

Queene,' I mean *glory* in my *general* intention; but, in my *particular*, I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of the queen and her kingdom in Faeryland." He afterwards adds, that "in some places also I do otherwise shadow her." And, further, the poet informs us that "her majesty is two persons, a royal queen and a most virtuous and beautiful lady." Truly her majesty might have viewed herself "in mirrors more than one," and, as she much liked, in different dresses, — now as the Faerie Queen, now as Belphœbe, now as Cynthia, now as Mercilla; and, in the "Legend of Chastity," who would deny that Britomart is the shadow of the Virgin Queen, notwithstanding that this lady-warrior bears a closer resemblance to Virgil's Camilla, to Ariosto's Bradamante, and Tasso's Clorinda? All this the poet has revealed; but, had he been silent, these mystical types might have baffled even the perilous ingenuity of Upton, his egregious expounder of the double sense, the exuberance of whose conjectural sagacity might have enlightened and charmed even Spenser himself!

The poet was himself aware, that, when an allegory does not gracefully unveil itself, it admits of the most dubious expositions. The allegories of the "Faery Queen" which allude to public events are transparent. The first book exhibits the struggles of the Reformation with Papistry. Una is Truth; the Red-cross Knight, the Christian militant, still subjected to trial and infirmity, separated from Una, or, as it was called, "the true Religion," by the magical illusions of Archimagus, whom Warton considers was the Arch-Fiend himself; but Upton, only an adumbration of "his Holiness." The terrible giant, Orgoglio, seems to have a stronger claim to be the proud and potent Bishop of Rome, enamoured as he is of Superstition in the false Duessa, that gorgeous enchantress, so fair and foul, arrayed in purple and scarlet, whom he has seated on his seven-headed dragon, and on whose head he has placed a triple crown. The dark den of monstrous Error, the hastening cavalcade of every splendid vice, the combat

with the Infidel Sans Foy, the church militant finally triumphant in the solemn union of the Red-cross with Una, complete the allegory of "Holiness." The Apocalypse may serve as the commentary on some of these personages; but the well-known title of the lady may not be risked to "ears polite." But such is the movable machinery of allegorical history, that Sir Walter Scott, in his review of Todd's Spenser, has discovered many other shadowings of *facts* in the history of Christian "Holiness," who, like the Red-cross Knight, separated from Una, had to encounter "the monster Error, and her brood," in paganism, before the downfall of Orgoglio and Duessa, and Popery in England: in the freedom of the Red-cross Knight from his imprisonment, our critic reveals the establishment of the Protestant Church.* Sir Walter might have noticed Spenser's abhorrence of the Puritans.

The allegory is still more obvious when the poet alludes to some contemporary events. It is then a masquerade by daylight, where the maskers pass on, holding their masks in their hands. In the fifth book we see the distressed knight, Bourbon, opposed by a rabble-rout in his attempt to possess himself of the Lady *Fleur de Lis*, whom he loves for "her lordships and her lands." He bears away that half-reluctant and coy lady. But, for this purpose, Bourbon had basely changed his shield; and, reproached by Sir Arthegal, or Justice, he offers but a recreant's apology: —

> "When time shall serve,
> My former shield I may resume again:
> To temporize is not from truth to swerve.
>
> 'Fie on such forgerie!' said Arthegal;
> 'Under one hood to shadow faces twain.' "

The change of shields of Sir Bourbon is the change of faith of Henry of Navarre; and the reluctant mistress is that uncompliant France whom he forced to take him as her mon-

* "Edinburgh Review," vol. vii. p. 215.

arch. Not less obvious is the episode of the Lady Belgé calling for aid on the British prince, — she, now widowed, and whose seventeen sons were reduced to five by the cruelties of Geryon, and the horrors of that implacable "monster, who lay hid in darkness, under the cursed Idol's altar-stone:" the great revolution of the Netherlands, the reduction of the seventeen provinces, and the horrors of a Romish persecution, are apparent.

But, when the allegory runs into obscurer incidents and more fictitious personages than those which we have noticed, it becomes rarefied into volatile conjecture, or, by our ingenuity, may be shaped into partial resemblances, always uncertain when we accept invented fictions as historical evidence. We know that a writer of an elaborate fictitious narrative may have touched on circumstances and characters caught from life; but all these, in passing through the mind of the inventor, are usually so altered from their reality, to be accommodated to the higher design of the invention, that any parallel in private history, or any likeness of an individual character, any indistinct allusion, can never deserve our historical confidence. A picture of human nature would be an anomalous work, in which we could trace no resemblance to individuals, or discover no coincidences of circumstances.

A century and a half after the publication of the "Faery Queen," a commentator of "the double sense" revealed to its readers that sealed history which they had never read, and which the poet had never divulged. A few traditional rumors may have floated down; but it was Upton's edition which startled the world by the abundance of its modern revelations.

John Upton, Prebendary of Rochester, and the master of a public school, which he raised to eminence, was distinguished for his scholastic acquirements, the depth of his critical erudition, and for his acquaintance with the history of the Elizabethan court, chiefly, however, drawn from Camden. Acute

in his emendations of texts, they were not, however, slightly tinged by an over-refining pedantry at the cost of his taste; and, as his judgment was the infirmest of his faculties, in his enthusiasm for an historical illustration of Spenser, he seems often encumbered by his knowledge striking out similitudes and parallels: a few appear not infelicitous; but many are suggested in the licentiousness of vague conjecture, or left half in the light, and half in the dark. His "Critical Observations on Shakspeare" remind one of Bentley's "slashing" of Milton. Dr. Johnson has been censured for the severity of his character of UPTON. I know not whether the doctor ever attended to Upton's Commentary on Spenser; he has, however, admirably hit off a prominent feature of our critic: "Every cold" (in Upton's case, I would rather say warm) "empiric, when his heart is expanded by a successful experiment, swells into a theorist."

"In one sense," says UPTON, "you are in Fairyland; yet, in another, you may be in the British dominions." And, further, "where the *moral* allusion is not apparent, you must look for an *historical* allusion." Such are the fundamental positions of the allegorical theory, by which a conjectural historian designs to unveil the secret sense of a romantic epic; the poet, according to him, having frigidly descended into the historiographer of the court of Elizabeth, rather than of the court of the Faery Queen, — to catch "the Cynthias of the minute," and to waste his colors on their evanescent portraits.

And amusing it is to watch the historical conjecturer of a romantic poem perilously creeping along the dark passages of secret history; but he is often at a stand. In "the palpable obscure," the historical reality, which he seems to be touching, suddenly disappears under his grasp. We have no golden key to open the occult chamber, where we are told so many knights and ladies lie entranced near two centuries in their magical sleep, and where, amid the shadowiness, the historical

necromancer promptly furnishes us with their very names, recognizing all these enchanted persons by their very attitudes.

One of his most felicitous conjectures regards "the gentle Squire Timias" as the poet's honored friend, Sir Walter Rawleigh. Sir Walter once incurred the disgrace of the queen by a criminal amour with one of the maids of honor: he was for some time banished the court; but the injury to the lady was expiated by marriage. The private history we are to look for in the allegory. Timias offends Belphœbe, the patroness of Chastity, and the Queen of England, who surprised "the gentle squire" in a very suspicious attitude of tenderness with Amoret. This lady was suffering from violence, having been "rapt by greedie Lust;" and the gentle squire himself had partaken of the mischance, in encountering that savage. Timias, the knight, is seen —

> "From her fair eyes wiping the dewy wet,
> Which softly slid; and kissing them atween,
> And handling soft the hurts which she did get."

Belphœbe on the sudden appears, and indignantly exclaims, —

> "'Is this the faith?' she said, and said no more;
> But turned her face, and fled away for evermore."

In a romantic scene,* "the gentle squire" in banishment is wasted with grief, so as not to be recognized by his friends: his lone companion is a turtle-dove, a magical and sympathizing bird, who entices Belphœbe, that Sovereign Chastity, to pursue its playful flight, till it leads her to the cell of the miserable man from whom she had so long averted her face; and Timias recovers her favor.

In this extended scene, we are to view the condition of Rawleigh during his disgrace; and the opening of the canto gives some countenance to the particular application. The aptitude of a resemblance, however, may only be a coinci-

* Book iii. canto viii.

dence. The fatal error of our conjectural historian is that of spinning at his allegory long after he is left without a thread. In Amoret's calamitous adventure, "rapt by greedie Lust," Upton sees an adumbration of the lady of Sir Walter *before* her marriage; and in another adventure, where another person, *Serena*, with "the gentle squire," are both carried to a hermit's cell, to be healed of the wounds inflicted by calumny and scandal, their condition *after* marriage. Our diviner, as further evidence of "the double sense," discovers how remarkably appropriate was the name of Serena to the lady of Rawleigh.

In all these transmigrations of persons, the enigmatical expounder acknowledges that the typical incidents suddenly diverge from their prototype. The parallels run crooked, and the fictions will not square with the facts; and he desperately exclaims, that "the poet has designedly perplexed the story:" but he concludes with this hardy asumption, "If the reader cannot see through these disguises, he will see nothing but *the dead letter*." And what but "the dead letter," as this hierophant of mystic senses asperses the free inventions of genius, can now interest the readers of Spenser? For the honor of our poet, we protest against the dark and broken dreams hovering about a commentator's desk. Who can credit that the courteous and courtly spirit of Spenser would thus lay bare to the public eye the delicate history of the lady of Sir Walter, even by a remote allusion? Yet this he does by connecting her name with Amoret carried away by "greedie Lust;" and with Serena, who required to be healed of the wounds inflicted by scandal. Can we conceive that the poet would have thus deliberately re-opened the domestic wound, still tender, of his patron-friend, and distressed that "serene" lady, in a poem to be read by them, to be conned by malicious eyes, and to be consigned to posterity?

The readers of Upton's revelations may often be amused by his lettered ingenuity reasoning with eager perversity. In

book ii., canto i., a pathetic incident occurs in a forest, where we find a lady with her infant on her bosom, and her knight extended in death beside her. Her shriek is deadly as the blow she has given herself. Guyon, the Knight of Temperance, flies to her succor: dying, she tells how "her liefest lord" had been beguiled, "for he was flesh," by Acrasia, or sensual pleasure. The lady had recovered him from the fell embraces of that sorceress, who, in parting, seduces him to drink from a charmed cup her accursed *wine*. On his return homewards with his lady, he would quench his thirst at a fountain; but —

"So soon as Bacchus with the Nymphe does lincke," —

that is, the instant the pure water reaches his viny lips, — he tastes, and he dies!

The Knight of Temperance takes the infant from the bleeding bosom of the mother to wash it in the fountain; but no water could cleanse its bloody hand; hence it was to be called "Ruddimane:" it was "a sacred symbol in the son's flesh, to tell of the mother's innocence." Upton had discovered that the great Irish insurrectionist O'Neal, as Camden records, "dwelt in all the pollutions of unchaste embraces, and had several children by O'Donnel's wife."

The badge of the O'Neals was "a bloody hand." In the ecstasy of divination, he exclaims, "This lady with the bloody-handed babe is — the wife of O'Neal!" The dying lady had told her sad tale, but never had she hinted at the Irish origin. Her knight had fallen a victim to Acrasia; a suitable incident in the legend of temperance, — a result of that "passion" at which the poet pointed, and described as one which —

"Robs Reason of her due regality."

And this simple incident is converted into the fate of the O'Neals, presenting an image of the miseries of the Irish Rebellion!

We pass by the contemporary portraits inscribed by our speculative historian with real names. When fancy is busy, likenesses are often found; a single feature is sometimes taken for a whole physiognomy. Never surely did our conjecturer shoot wider of the mark than when he discovered, in the two burlesque characters of the poltroon Braggadochio and his cheating squire Trompart, the Duke of Anjou and his envoy Simier. These were eminent characters known in the court of Elizabeth. To the French prince the queen seemed partial; and once placed a ring on his finger, too sanguinely accepted as a plight of betrothment: and Simier was a discreet diplomatist, whom the queen publicly commended for his conduct. To have degraded such distinguished men by such vulgar baseness would have been a discrepancy in the taste and decorum of our courtly poet which Spenser never betrayed.*

In regard to Spenser, after all these allusions problematical for a succeeding generation, the poet is no longer to be judged by the darkness which has hidden small and fugitive matters. We cannot know the degree which Spenser allowed himself in distant allusions to the court of Elizabeth, or, as the poet himself vaguely said, to "Fairyland:" he may have promised far more than he would care to perform; for an epical poet must have found the descent into a chronicler of scandalous legends, a portrayer of so many nameless personages, incompatible with the flow and elevation of his themes. And

* It has been observed of Upton, that, though an excellent classical scholar, he was little versed in the romances of chivalry. In the romance of "Gyron le Courtois," he would have found the original of the farcical Knight Braggadochio; a fact, long after I had written the above, which I owe to Mr. Southey. Such ludicrous caricatures are unusual with the delicacy and elegance of Spenser, and they seem never to have been struck in his mint. I suspect we should not have had such farcical personages in the "Faery Queen," had not Spenser's propensity to imitation induced him to follow his beloved patron, who has not happily introduced in the "Arcadia" the low comic of Damœtas and his ugly daughter Mopsa.

for what was never ascertained in its own age we dare not confide to that mystical vaticinator of past events, a conjectural historian!

Our interpreter of allegory was honest as well as hardy: in truth, he is sometimes startled at the historical revelations which crowd on his mind. It required "the hound's fine footing," to borrow the beautiful figure of Spenser himself, for our conjecturer to course in this field of allegory. With great candor he says, "Let us take care we do not overrun our game, or start more game than we are able to catch." His occasional dilemmas are amusing. He perplexed himself by a discovery that Amoret, whom he had made the lady of Sir Walter Rawleigh, might also have served for Mary, Queen of Scots. In this critical crucifixion, he cries in torture, "I will neither affirm nor deny that Amoret is the type of Mary, Queen of Scots!" But he had his ecstasies; for on another occasion, having indulged a very extravagant fancy, he exclaims in joyous rapture, "This may show how far types and symbols may be carried!" Yet, with his accustomed candor, he lowers down. "If the reader should think my arguments too flimsy, and extended beyond their due limits, and should laugh —

> 'To see their thrids so thin as spiders frame,
> And eke so short that seemed their ends out shortly came,' —

let him consider the latitude of interpretation all types and symbolical writings admit."* Truly that latitude has been too often abused on graver subjects than "the Faery Queen;" but the honesty of our mystical interpreter of double senses may plead for the extravagance of his ingenuity, whenever he needs our indulgence.

Enough on this curious subject of allegory, — this child of darkness among the luminous progeny of Fancy. We have

* Upton's note at the close of the fifth book of "the Faery Queen."

shown its changeable nature, and how frequently it fails in unity and clearness; we have demonstrated that "the double sense" — this system of types and symbols — has served as an imposture, since allegories have been deduced from works which were not allegorical, and forced interpretations of an ambiguous sense have led to fallacies which have fatally been introduced into history, into politics, and into theology.

THE FIRST TRAGEDY AND THE FIRST COMEDY.

In the transition from the simpler interlude to the aggrandizement of a more complicate scene and more numerous personages, so indistinct were the notions of tragedy and comedy, that the writer of a morality in 1578, declaring that his purpose was to represent "the manners of men, and fashion of the world, now-a-days," distinguishes his drama both as "a Pleasant Tragedy" and "a Pitiful Comedy."* This play, indeed, may be placed among the last of the ancient dramas; and it is probable that the author considered that these vague expressions might serve to designate a superior order of dramatic productions.

The term Comedy was as indefinite in France as with ourselves. Margaret of Valois, in 1544, gave the title of Comedy to such scriptural pieces as "the Nativity," "the Adoration of the Kings," and "the Massacre of the Innocents;" and in Spain, at the same period, they also called their moral pieces comedies. The title of one of these indicates their matter, "La Doleria del Sueño del Mundo; Comedia tratada por via de Philosophia Moral," — "The Anguish of the Sleep of the World; a Comedy treated in the style of Philosophic Morality." Comedy was the general appellative for a play. Shakspeare himself calls the play of the players in "Hamlet" both a tragedy and a comedy. It is quite evident that at this period they had no distinct conception of comedy merely as a pleas-

* "A Moral and Pitiful Comedie," entitled "All for Money," &c., by T. Lupton, 1578. In the prologue, the author calls it "A Pleasant Tragedy."

ant exhibition of society. Aristotle had not afforded them a correct description in our sense, drawing his notions from the old comedy, those personal satires or farcical lampoons acted on the Athenian stage.

To this day we remain still unsatisfied what Dante meant by calling his great poem a "Commedia." Dante throws the same sort of mystery over the species of his poem as he has done over the creation of a classical diction for his own Italy. According to his interpretation, the lofty style was denominated tragic; and, in opposition to it, he has called his work "Commedia," as of a more humble style; and, on another occasion, he describes comedy as something that begins sadly and ends happily, as we find it in his great poem. We must, however, accept the definition as very obscure, when we consider that both his subject and his diction so often led him to sublimity of conception and expression; but the style of criticism was yet unformed in the days of the Italian Homer.

It is remarkable that Boccaccio has entitled his pastoral of "Ameto" a "Commedia delle Ninfe Fiorentine." It is difficult to imagine that the almost contemporaneous commentator would have misused the word: we might presume he attached the idea of a drama to this disputed term.

While these indistinct notions of tragedy and comedy were prevalent with us, even long after we had a public theatre, we really possessed tragedy and comedy in their more classical form, — Tragedy, which soared to the sententiousness of Seneca; and Comedy, which sported with Plautus and Terence.

We owe this first TRAGEDY in our language, represented before the queen in 1561 by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple, to the master-spirit who planned "the Mirror for Magistrates," and left as its model "the Induction." SACKVILLE, Lord Buckhurst, the first Earl of Dorset, in that national poem had struck with the nerve of Chaucer while he anticipated the grave melodious stanza and the picturing

invention of Spenser. But, called away from the land of the Muses to the political cabinet, this fine genius seems repeatedly to have consigned his works to the hands of others: even his lighter productions are still concealed from us in their anonymous condition. As, in "the Mirror for Magistrates," Sackville had resigned that noble scheme to inferior names; so in this tragedy of "Ferrex and Porrex," or, as it was sometimes entitled, "the Tragedy of Gorboduc," while his genius struck out the same originality of plan, yet the titlepage informs us that he accepted a coadjutor in THOMAS NORTON, who, as much as we know of him in other things, was a worthy partner of Sternhold and Hopkins.

In this first tragedy in our language, cast in the mould of classical antiquity, we find a division of scenes and a progressive plot carried on, though somewhat heavily, through five acts: the ancient ethical choruses are preserved, changing their metres with rhyme. And here, for the first time, blank verse was recited on the stage. Notwithstanding these novel refinements, our first tragedy bears a strong impress of ancient simplicity. Every act was preceded by "a dumb show," prefiguring the incidents of the opening act: these scenical displays of something considered to be analogous to the matter were remains of the pageants.

Blank verse, which the Earl of Surrey had first invented for his version of "Virgil," the Earl of Dorset now happily applied to the dramatic dialogue. To both these noblemen our poets owe their emancipation from rhyme; but the rhythmical artifices of blank verse were not discovered in the monotonous, uncadenced lines of its inventors. The happiest inventor does not overcome all difficulties.

SACKVILLE, in this tragedy, did not work with the potent mastery of his "Induction;" his fire seems smothered in each exact line; he steals on with care, but with fear, as one treading on ice; and appears not to have settled in his mind the true language of emotion, for we feel none. He is ethical

more than dramatic. His lifeless personages have no distinctness of character; his speeches are scholastic orations: but the purity of his diction and the aptness of his epithets are remarkable; his words and phrases are transparent; and he may be read with ease by those not versed in ancient lore. The political part of the tragedy is not destitute of interest; developing the misery of fraternal wars, the division of sovereign power, each contending for dominion, and closing in the dissolution of all government by the despair of a people. We have ourselves witnessed in these times a similar scene of the enmity of brothers and monarchs.

A political anecdote concerning this tragedy is worth recording. In the discussions of the dangers and mischiefs of such a state of insubordination, the poet, adopting the prevalent notions of the divine right and the authority of "the absolute king," inculcates the doctrine of passive obedience. These lines, which appear in the first edition, were silently removed from the later ones.* It is an evidence that these dreary principles, which in the following reigns of James and Charles produced such fatal misunderstandings, even at this time began to be questioned. Our poet, however, under the reckless councils of a court minion, had covered the severest satire on those monarchs who rage with "the lust of kingdoms," and "subject to no law," and who hold their enormous will to be the privilege of regal power. Sackville seems to have adopted the principle which Machiavel had artfully managed in his "Prince," in the spirit of damning irony.

There is such a level equality throughout the whole style of this drama,† that it has given rise to a suspicion that the work could only be the composition of one mind and one ear. It is not in the constitution of the human intellect that Norton

* The lines, which are very miserable, are preserved in Dodsley's "Old Plays."

† Warton has analyzed this drama in his "History of English Poetry," vol. iv. 178, 8vo. It is in the collection of Dodsley and Hawkins.

could emulate Sackville, or that Sackville could bring himself down to Norton. This internal evidence struck Warton; and, tracing it by "the Mirror for Magistrates," the suspicion was confirmed: the scenes of "Gorboduc" are visibly marked with the greater poet's characteristics, "in a perspicuity of style and a command of numbers superior to the tone of his times." The name of Norton affixed to the titlepage might only indicate his management of the pageants! and possibly, being a licenser of books and a Puritan, even his name might be a recommendation of this drama, for certain persons. Few things in those days were more loosely conducted than the business and the artifices of printers, who generally procured their copies surreptitiously, or were permitted to accommodate them to their own free management and deceptive titlepages.

We must not decide on *the first tragedy* by a comparison with the more attractive and impassioned ones which soon afterwards inundated our theatres. The court-circle had never before listened to such an amazing novelty; and the poetic-critic of that day pronounced that "those stately speeches and well-sounding phrases were full of notable morality, which it doth most delightfully teach." Sir Philip Sidney only grieved that this tragedy might not remain as an exact model of all tragedies, being "faulty both in place and time,—the two necessary companions of all corporal actions." Sidney did not live to witness the code of Aristotle impugned, and his unities set at defiance, by a swarm of dramatic bees, whose wild music and native sweetness were in their own humming and their own honey.

This our first tragedy attracted by its classical form the approval of some great moderns. Rymer, a stout Aristotelian, who has written on tragedy, was astonished to find "such a classical fable on this side the Alps," which, he plainly tells us, "might have been a better direction to Shakspeare and Jonson than any which they had the luck to follow." And Pope was not the less struck by the chaste style and the deco-

rum of Sackville, who, having several murders in his tragedy, veiled them from the public eye; conforming to the great Horatian canon, they are told, and not viewed in the representation. Pope in conversation declared, too, that Sackville wrote in a much purer style than Shakspeare in his first plays, without affectation and bombast! and he has delivered a more formal decision in print: "The writers of the succeeding age might have improved as much in other respects by copying from Sackville, from a propriety in the sentiments and dignity in the sentences, and an unaffected perspicuity of style, which all the succeeding poets, not excepting Shakspeare himself, either little understood, or perpetually neglected."

These are edicts from the school of classical antiquity. It was on the earnest recommendation of Pope that Spence published an edition of this tragedy, which had accidently been put into the hands of Pope by the father of the Wartons. Our vernacular writers, even the greatest, were almost unknown in that day, and they only accidently occurred.*

Spence, a feeble classical critic, was so overcome by the notion that "a privy-councillor" must be more versant in the language and the feelings of royalty than a plebeian poet, that, in his preface pointing out "the stately speeches," he exclaimed in ecstasy, "'Tis no wonder if the language of *kings* and *statesmen* should be less happily imitated by a *poet* than a *privy-councillor*." To vindicate Shakspeare, at whom this unguarded blow seemed levelled, the historian of our poetry,

* This our first tragedy, "Ferrex and Porrex," offers a striking evidence of our literary knowledge. Dryden, alluding to it, refers to a spurious copy published under the title of "Gorboduc:" but he could not have seen it; for he calls it "Queen Gorboduc," whereas he is "King;" and he appears to think that it was written in *rhyme*, and notices Shakspeare as the inventor of blank verse! When Pope requested Spence to reprint "Gorboduc," they were so little cognizant of these matters, that the spurious and defective "Gorboduc" was printed instead of the genuine "Ferrex and Porrex." This ignorance of our ancient writers lasted to a later period.

seated in his professorial chair, flung his lightning on the impious critic. "Whatever merit there is in this play, and particularly in the speeches, it is more owing to the poet than the privy-councillor. If a first minister was to write a tragedy, I believe the piece will be the better, the less it has of the first minister. When a statesman turns poet, I should not wish him to fetch his ideas or his language from the cabinet. I know not why a king should be better qualified than a private man to make kings talk in blank verse."

Literary history would have supplied the positive fact. Cardinal Richelieu, that great minister, wrote a memorable tragedy; and, in accordance with his own familiar notions, the minister called it "Europe." It was written in the style of "a privy-councillor," and it was hissed! while Corneille, who wrote as a poet, for the national theatre, composed sentiments which statesmen got by heart.

Our literary antiquaries long doted on the first English comedy,—"Gammer Gurton's Needle;" being a regular comedy in five acts in rhyme. The rusticity of the materials is remarkable. A diligent crone, darning the lower habiliments of Hodge, loses her needle,—

> "A little thing, with a hole in the end, as bright as any siller (silver);
> Small, long, sharp at the point, and straight as any piller."

Had a needle not been a domestic implement of more rarity than it is since Birmingham flourished, we had not had such a pointed and polished description. In fact, the loss of the Gammer's needle sets the whole village in flames; the spark falling from the mischievous waggery of a Tom o' Bedlam in an artful insinuation against a certain gossip notable for the luxuriance of her grotesque invectives. Dame Chat is a scold, whose curses and oaths neither the fish-market nor Shakspeare himself could have gone beyond. Brawls and battles involve the justice, the curate, and the Devil himself, in their agency. The prime author of all the mischief produces the

catastrophe; for he contrives to make Hodge extract from a part more tender than his heart the cause of so much discord, with great risk to its point and straightness; and the parties conclude, —

"For Gammer Gurton's needle's sake, let us have a PLAUDITE!"

The writer of this extraordinary, and long supposed to be the earliest comedy in our language, the titlepage informs us was Mr. S——, Master of Arts; and, moreover, that it was acted at the University of Cambridge. When afterwards it was ascertained that Mr. S—— was no less a person than JOHN STILL, subsequently Bishop of Bath and Wells, it did not diminish the number of its admirers. The black-letter brotherhood were long enamoured of this most ancient comedy, as a genuine beauty of the infancy of the drama. Dodsley and Hawkins enshrined "Gammer Gurton's Needle" in their "Reliquary;" and literary superstition —

"Swore it was the relic of a saint."

The mere lovers of antiquity endured the raillery of the wits for the puerility of the plot, the vulgar humor, and the homeliness of the style. One had asserted that "STILL had displayed the true genius of comedy, and the choice of his *subject* only was to be regretted;" another declared that "the vein of familiar humor and a kind of grotesque imagery are not unlike some parts of Aristophanes, but without the graces of *language*." Thus one admirer gives up the subject, and another the style! Even Warton fondly lingered in an apology for the grossness of the "Gammer." — "In a polished age, that writer would have chosen, nor would he perhaps have disgraced, a better subject. It has been thought surprising that a learned audience could have endured some of the indelicate scenes; but the established festivities of scholars were gross, and agreeable to their general habits." This apology has turned out to be more plausible than true.

This ancient comedy is the work of a truly comic genius, who knew not how to choose his subject, and indulged a taste repulsive to those who only admit of delicate and not familiar humor. Its grossness, however, did not necessarily result from the prevalent grossness of the times; since a recent discovery, with which Warton was unacquainted, has shown the world that an English comedy, which preceded the hitherto supposed first comedy in our language, is remarkable for its chasteness, the propriety of its great variety of characters, the truth of the manners in a wide circle of society, and the uninterrupted gayety pervading the whole airy composition.

So recently as in 1818, an ancient printed drama, styled "Ralph Roister Doister," was discovered;* a legitimate comedy of five acts in rhyme, and, as the writer himself professes, modelled on the dramas of Plautus and Terence. He claims for it the honor of the highest class, — that of "comedy;" but this term was then so indistinct, that the poet adds the more usual one of "interlude."

Gammer Gurton is a representation of sordid rusticity. Roister Doister opens the movable scenery of domestic life in the metropolis, touched with care, and warm with reality. The plot, without involution, progresses through the acts. An egotistical and affectedly amorous hairbrain, ever lamenting the dangerous beauty of his ridiculous self, fancies to marry a fair dame. He is hit off as —

> "So fervent hot wooing, and so far from wiving,
> I trow, never was any creature living."

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* Reprinted by the Rev. Mr. Briggs, the possessor. After a limited reprint, it was republished as the first number of a cheap edition of Old English Dramas, published by T. White, 1830; a work carried on to a few volumes only. The text reads apparently very correct, and seems to have passed under a skilful eye. I have read it with attention, because I read it with delight. [It has since been reprinted by the Shakspeare Society, carefully collated from the unique original now in Eton-College Library, by Mr. Payne Collier.]

He is the whetstone of a sharp parasite, whose opening monologue exhibits his full portrait: —

> "But, know ye, that for all this merry note of mine,
> He might appose me now that should ask where I dine."

He runs over a nomenclature of a most variegated acquaintance, with some fugitive strictures exquisitely personal. We find ourselves in a more advanced stage in society than we expected in the reigns of our last Henry or Edward. Such personages abounded in the twenty years of peace and luxury under James the First, when the obsequious hanger-on flourished among the town-heroes of "the Gull's Horn-book." This parasite is also one of those domestic dependants whose shrewdness and artifices supply a perpetual source of comic invention; such as those found among the Latin dramatists, whose scenes and incidents are Grecian, and from whom this "Matthew Merry-greek," by his name, seems happily transplanted. This poet delights by scenes colored with the truth of nature, and by the clear conception of his domestic personages. There is a group of domestics, — the ancient housekeeper spinning on her distaff amidst her maidens, some sewing, some knitting, all in free chat: these might have formed a study for the vivid Teniers, and even for Shakspeare in his happiest vein. They are not the domestics of Swift and of Mandeville, — the spoilers of the establishment: not that they are without the common feelings of the servants' hall; for they have at heart the merry prosperity of their commonwealth. After their "drudgerie," to dissipate their "weariness" was the fundamental principle of the freedom of servitude. Their chorus is "lovingly to agree." A pleasant song, on occasion of the reception of "a new-come man" in the family, reveals the "mystery" of their ancient craft.*

* This song of domesticity, as probably it never has been noticed, I preserve in the note, that the reader may decide on the melody of such native simplicity.

This song may have been written about the close of the reign of Henry

These early dramatists describe their characters by their names; an artless mode, which, however, long continued to be the practice of our comic writers; and we may still trace it in modern comedies. Steele, in his periodical paper, "the Lover," condemned it as no better a device than of underwriting the name of an animal: it is remarkable, that, in this identical paper, an old bachelor is called "Wildgoose," and the presumed author of "the Lover" is Marmaduke "Myrtle."

the Eighth. The short ballad metres in our ancient poems are perfectly harmonious, and the songs are racy and joyous:—

I.
"A thing very fitte
For them that have witte,
And are felowes knitte,
Servants in one house to bee;
As fast fast for to sitte,
And not oft to flitte,
Nor varie a whitte,
But lovingly to agree.

II.
No man complainyng
Nor other disdainyng
For losse or for gainyng,
But felowes or friends to bee;
No grudge remainyng,
No work refrainyng,
Nor helpe restrainyng,
But lovingly to agree.

III.
No man for despite
By worde or by write
His felowe to twite,
But further in honestie;
No good turns entwite,
Nor old sores recite,
But let all goe quite,
And lovingly to agree.

IV.
After drudgerie,
When they be werie,
Then to be merie,
To laugh and sing they be free;
With chip and cherie,
High derie derie,
Trill on the berie,
And lovingly to agree."

Anstey has made the most happy use of characteristic names in the "Bath Guide;" which is an evidence that they may still be successfully appropriated, whenever an author's judgment equals the felicity of his invention.

Of a comedy, conjectured to have been written at the close of the reign of Henry the Eighth, we may be surprised that the language hardly retains a vestige of the rust of antiquity: so true it is, that the familiar language of the people has been preserved with rare innovations. Its Alexandrine measure, properly read or chanted, is a metre which runs on with facility: the versification has even happily imitated the sounds of the different instruments played on in one of the serenades; a refinement which we could not have imagined to have been within the reach of an artificer of verse in those days. All this would look suspicious, if for an instant we could imagine that this admirable drama was the contrivance of some Chatterton or Ireland. In style and versification, the writer far distanced those of his contemporaries, whose affectation of phrases rendered them harsh and obscure: he has, therefore, approached us. It is remarkable also that the very measure of this ancient dramatist, though those whose ear is only used to the decasyllabic measure have called it "a long hobbling metre," has been actually chosen by a modern poet, when writing familiar dialogue with the design of reviving rhymed comedy.*

The fate of some books is as remarkable as the histories of some men. This lorn and lost drama, deprived even of its title and the printer's name, offered no clew to the discovery of the fine genius who composed it; and the possessor, who deposited it in the library of Eton College, was not at all aware of its claim to be there preserved. It was to subsequent research, after the reprint had been made, that both the writer and the celebrity of his comedy were indisputably

* Hayley

ascertained. We owe the discovery to a comic incident in the drama: an amatory epistle prepared by a scrivener's hand, for our gay amourists then could not always compose if they could write their billets-doux, being maliciously read to the lady, by purposely neglecting the punctuation, turned out to be a severe satire. The discomfited lover hastens to wreak his vengeance on the hapless scribe; who, however, reading it with the due punctuation, proves it to be a genuine love-letter. Wilson, in his "Art of Logic," gave this letter as an example of the use of punctuation in settling the sense; and without which, as in the present instance, we may have "a double sense and contrary meaning." He fortunately added, that his example was "taken out of an interlude made by NICHOLAS UDALL."

This was the learned UDALL, the Master of Eton School; and this very comedy had been so universally admired, that "Roister Doister" became a proverbial phrase to designate a hair-brained coxcomb. We now possess two pictures of the habits, the minds, and the dialogue of the English people in rural and in city life by two contemporaries, who wanted not the art of "holding the mirror up to nature."

THE PREDECESSORS AND CONTEMPORARIES OF SHAKSPEARE.

THE establishment of a variety of theatres is an incident in the history of the people, as well as of the national genius. The drama at first existed, it may be said, in privacy. Royalty and nobility maintained their own companies; the universities acted at their colleges, the "children" or the singing boys at the public schools, the lawyers at their halls; and some of the gentry at their seats had servants who were players. A stage for strollers would occasionally be hastily erected in the unsheltered yards of inns; and they would ramble into the country, till an Act of Elizabeth, in 1572, controlled these erratic bodies, classing them with "rogues and vagabonds." Throughout the kingdom, there was a growing predilection for theatrical entertainments: it was the national anticipation of a public theatre.

If Elizabeth, a popular sovereign, in 1572 checked the strollers assuming the character of players, two years afterwards, in 1574, she granted a patent to the servants of the Earl of Leicester* "to exercise the faculty of playing stage-plays, as well for the recreation of our loving subjects as for our solace and pleasure;" and she added, "within our city of London, and of any of our cities." This was a boon royally given, in which her "loving subjects" might gather from the tone of this dramatic state-paper, that the queen had resolved

* This patent, corrected from a former copy in Rymer, has been recovered by Mr. Collier. — *Annals of the Stage*, i. 211.

in council that the public should not be denied sharing in her own amusements.

The pleasures of the people were not, however, yet those of their grave seignors. The puritanic spirit of the anti-dramatists, which sometimes divided the councils of the queen, had lodged among the honest wardmotes. A protracted contest between the privy-council and the lord-mayor in common council, with protests and petitions, rose up; and long it seemed hopeless to patronize the players, who were not suffered to play. The Recorder Fleetwood, of whom we have many curious police-reports in the style of a *lieutenant de police*, — as the chief of his own spies, and the executioner of his own decrees, — had himself a fertile dramatic invention, which was largely developed in the singular "orders of the common-council" against the alarming innovation of PUBLIC PLAYS in the boundaries of the civic jurisdiction.* There was not a calamity, moral and physical, which could happen to any city, which the recorder has not made concomitant with the opening of playhouses. The infection of the plague was, however, then an irrefutable argument. In this contest between the court and the city, the common-council remained dogged asserters of their privileges: they drove the players from their sacred precincts to the boundaries and to "the liberties," where, however, they harassed these children of fancy by a novel claim, — that none were to be free in the "liberties" but themselves; which argument was submitted to the

* This singular document, incorrectly given by Strype, Mr. Collier has completed. "It throws much new light on the state of the drama at this period," and still more on the strange arguments which the Puritans of the day alleged against players and plays. Mr. Collier has preserved an old satirical epigram which had been perilous to print at that day: it was left for posterity on the fly-leaf of a book. It is addressed to —

"'The Fooles of the Cittee:'
They establish as a rule,
Not one shall play the fool
But they, — a worthy school!"

law-officers for their decision. The privy-council once more interfered, by a declaration that the chief-justices had not yet been able to determine their case, and therefore there was to be no present "intermeddling." It is evident that the government all along had resolved that the people should have a theatre. After two years of opposition to the patent granted to the players in 1574, the first playhouse was built, — a timber-house in the suburbs, — and received the appropriate title of "the Theatre:" and, about the same time, "the Curtain" rose in its vicinage, — a name supposed to have been derived from that appendage to a stage; for, to those who had been accustomed to the open stage of an inn-yard, the drop or "curtain" separating the actors from the audience was such a novelty, that it left its name to the house. The Blackfriars, the Round Globe, the Square Fortune, — whence Edward Alleyn, by his histrionic fame, drew the wealth which endowed Dulwich College, — are names almost consecrated by the eminent geniuses whose lives were connected with these theatres; and at one time it appears that seventeen playhouses had been erected: they were, however, wooden and thatched, till the Fortune was built with brick, and, in the theatrical phrase, "the heavens," that is, the open top, was tiled.

The popular fervor of the drama had now a centrical attraction; a place of social resort, with a facility of admission, was now opened;* and, when yet there was no reading public, the theatre would be substituted for the press; and often, wearied

* At the inferior playhouses, the admission was as low as a penny for "the groundlings," who stood in the roofless pit, which still retained the name of "the yard," — evidently from the old custom of playing in the yards of inns. In the higher theatres, "a room," or box, varied from sixpence to two shillings and sixpence. They played in daylight, and rose from their dinner to the playhouse. It was one of the city regulations, that "no playing be in the dark, so that the auditory may return home before sunset." Society was then in its nursery-times, and the solemnity of "the orders in common council" admirably contrasts with their simplicity; but they acted under the terror, that, when they entered a playhouse, they were joining in "the Devil's service!"

of the bearward and coarser sports, they flocked to the more intellectual entertainment. The playhouse was a wider sphere for their exertions, and it opened an arduous competition for the purveyors of these incessant novelties. The managers of theatres had now to look about for plays and playwrights. A general demand required not only an abundant, but, unfortunately, a rapid supply. What a crisis for genius, for its development and its destruction!

This was an event in the history of our literature which has not occurred in the literary history of any other European people. It was about the middle of the reign of Elizabeth that a race of dramatic writers burst forth on the nation, — writers, not easily numbered, of innumerable dramas.

Literature now opened a new avenue for a poor scholar; the first step of advancement in society from a collegiate life for those who found their future condition but ill provided for. A secretaryship, a chaplainship, or to be a gentleman's usher, — in a word, an humble retainer in great families, — circumscribed the ambition of the meek and the worthy: but there were others, in "their first gamesome age," whose —

> "Doting sires,
> Carked and cared to have them lettered;
> But their kind college from the teat did tent,
> And forced them walk before they weaned were." *

This, however, is but the style of apology which one of them gives to veil the fact that many were ejected from "the teat." Fiery emanations these, compelled to leave their cloistered solitudes, restless and reckless, they rushed to the metropolis, where this new mart of genius in the rising dramatic age was opened. Play-writing and play-acting, for they were often combined, were too magical a business to resist its delusions.

* Two such poor scholars are introduced in "the Return from Parnassus," alternately "banning and cursing Granta's muddy bank;" and Cambridge, where "our oil was spent."

They wrote, with rare exceptions, without revision. An act or two, composed with some meditation to awaken interest; a few movable scenes rapidly put together; and, at some fortunate moment, a burst of poetry, — usually wound up in pell-mell confusion: for how could they contrive a catastrophe to the chaos? Such writers relied on the passing curiosity which their story might raise, and more on the play of the actors, who, in the last bustling scenes, might lend an interest which the meagre dialogue of the economical poet so rarely afforded. They never wrote for posterity, and seem never to have pretended to it. They betrayed no sympathy for their progeny: the manager's stock was the foundling hospital for this spurious brood: the Muse even often sold her infant while it still lay on the breast. The huddled act of a play was despatched to the manager as the lure of a temporary loan, accompanied by a promissory note of expedition; and assuredly they kept to their word if ever they concluded the work.

This facility of production may be accounted for, not only from the more obvious cause which instigated their incessant toil, but from the ready sources whence they drew their materials. They dramatized evanescent subjects, in rapid competition, like the ballad-makers of their own day, or the novelists of ours; they caught "the Cynthia of the minute," — a domestic incident, — a tragic tale engaging the public attention produced many domestic tragedies founded on actual events; they were certain of exciting the sympathies of an audience. Two remarkable ones have been ascribed to Shakspeare by skilful judges, — "Arden of Feversham," where the repentance of an adulterous wife in the agony of conscience so powerfully reminds one of the great poet, that the German, Tieck, who has recently translated it, has not hesitated to subscribe to the opinion of some of our own critics; and "the Yorkshire Tragedy," which was printed with the name of Shakspeare in his own lifetime, and has been held to be

authentic; and surely "the Yorkshire Tragedy" at least possessed an equal claim with the monstrous "Titus Andronicus"* not to be ejected from the writings of Shakspeare. It is most probable that that, among others, was among the old plays which he often took in hand; and our judicial decisions have not always found "the divinity which stirs within them." The Italian novelists, which had been recently translated in PAINTER'S "Palace of Pleasure," these dramatists ransacked for their plots: this source opened a fresh supply of invention, and a combination of natural incidents, which varies the dry matter-of-fact drawn from the "Chronicles," which in their hands too often produced mere skeletons of poetry. They borrowed from the ancients when they could. Plautus was a favorite. They wrote for a day, and did not expect to survive many.

The rapid succession of this multitude of plays is remarkable: many have wholly perished by casualties and dispersions, and some possibly may still lie unsunned in their manuscript state.† We have only the titles of many which were

* The popular taste, at all times, has been prone to view in representation the most harrowing crimes; probably influenced by the vulgar notion, that, because the circumstances are literally true, they are therefore the more interesting. One of these writers was ROBERT YARRINGTON, who seems to have been so strongly attracted to this taste for scenical murder, that he wrote "Two Lamentable Tragedies," which he contrived to throw into one play. By a strange alternation, the scene veers backwards and forwards from England to Italy, both progressing together: the English murder is of a merchant in Thames Street; and the Italian, of a child in a wood, by ruffians hired by the uncle. The ballad deepens the pathetic by two babes; but which was the original of a domestic incident which first conveyed to our childhood the idea of an unnatural parent? It appears that we had a number of what they called "Lamentable Tragedies," whose very titles preserve the names of the hapless victims. Taylor, the water-poet, alludes to these "as murders fresh in memory;" and has himself described "the unnatural father who murdered his wife and children," as parallel to one of ancient date. Acts of unacy were not then distinguishable from ordinary murders. — *Collier*, iii. 49.

† Not many years ago, Isaac Reed printed "the Witch" of MIDDLETON. Recently another manuscript play appeared, — "the Second Maiden's

popular, while the names of some of these artificers have come down to us without any of their workmanship. In a private collection, Langbaine had gathered about a thousand plays, besides interludes and drolls; and yet these were but a portion of those plays, for many never passed through the press: the list of anonymous authors is not only considerable, but some of these are not inferior in invention and style to the best.* We may judge of the prolific production of these authors by THOMAS HEYWOOD, a fluent and natural writer, who never allowed himself time to cross out a line, and who has casually informed us that "he had either an entire hand, or at least a main finger, in two hundred and twenty plays."

The intercourse of the proprietors or managers of the theatres and these writers has been only incidentally, and indeed accidentally, revealed to us.† It was justly observed

Tragedy." To the personal distresses of the actors in the days of the Commonwealth we owe several dramas which they published, drawn out of the wrecks of some theatrical treasury: such was "the Wild-goose Chase" of FLETCHER, which they assured us was the poet's favorite. It is said that more than sixty of these plays, in manuscript, were collected by Warburton, the herald; and, from the utter neglect of the collector, had all gone to singe his fowls. When THEOBALD solemnly declared that his play, "the Double Falsehood," was written by Shakspeare, it was probably one of these old manuscript-plays. This drama was not unsuccessful; nor had Theobald shot far wide of the mark, since Farmer ascribed it to Shirley, and Malone to Massinger.

* See the last and enlarged edition of Charles Lamb's "Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets." In the second volume, in "Extracts from the Garrick Plays," under the odd names of "Doctor Dodypol, a Comedy," 1600, we have scenes exquisitely fanciful; and "Jack Drum's Entertainment," 1601, where "the free humor of a noble housekeeper" may be placed by the side of the most finished passages even in Shakspeare. Yet "Doctor Dodypol" has wholly escaped the notice even of catalogue-scribes, and "Jack Drum" is not noticed by the collectors of these old plays. I only know these two dramas by the excerpts of Lamb; but, if the originals are tolerably equal with "the Specimens," I should place these unknown dramas among the most interesting ones.

† By the discovery of the Diary of Henslow, the illiterate manager of the theatre, connected with Edward Alleyn. Henslow was the pawnbroker of the company, and the chancellor of its exchequer. He could not spell

by Gifford, that these dramatic poets, either from mortification or humility, abstained from dwelling or even entering upon their personal history. Though frequent in dedications, they are seldom explicit; and even their prefaces fail to convey any information, except of their wants or their grievances, from evils which are rarely specified. The truth is, that this whole poetical race, which suddenly broke out together, a sort of wild insurrection of genius, early found that they were nothing more than the hirelings of some crafty manager, at whose beck and mercy they lived. Writing plays was soon held to be as discreditable an occupation as that of the players themselves: indeed, not seldom the poets themselves were actors, — these departments were so frequently combined, that the term "player" is sometimes used equally for a performer on the stage and a writer of plays.

This fraternity, children of ill-fortune and of passion, were scarce distinguishable from each other; and, if the fortunes and the fate of some are more known, it is but by the recklessness of their days, — their criminal impetuosity. Several perished in their immaturity, torches blazing, while they were consuming themselves. The chance-record of the violent end of one, a cry of desperation still more horrible of another, the death-bed repentance of a third, the dishonorable life of dupery probably practised by a fourth,* are adapted to enter into moral if not into literary history.

The psychologist, the historian of the soul among the brotherhood of genius, — for such were many among them, — feels how precious are the slight memorials of noble passions disguised by a degraded existence. However tortuous their lives seem, some grasped at celebrity, and some looked towards

the titles of the plays; yet, in about five years, a hundred and sixty were his property. He had not less than thirty different authors in his pay. — *Collier*, iii. 105. [His Diary has been published by the Shakspeare Society, under the editorship of Mr. Payne Collier. — Ed.]

* Marlowe, Nash, Greene, Peele.

distant fame. If some have eloquently reproached themselves, there are, too, those who exulted in the consciousness of their intellectual greatness. They were of different magnitude; and, in the scroll of their names, some have been recognized by posterity.

An ungenial critic has morosely censured Robert Greene, who, harbored in an obscure lodging which a poor man's charity had yielded, when lying on his death-bed, prayed for the last favor that poor man's charity could bestow on a miserable but a conscious poet, — that his coffin might be covered with bays. In the shadow of death, the poet and the romancer dwelt on the fame which he cherished as life.

Even their small theatres appeared to the poet "thronged," and the heart of the dramatist would swell at "the shouts and claps." Drayton, who at a later day joined in several dramas, has perpetuated this rejoicing of the poet, which he himself had experienced in that small world, "the proud round" of the Globe Theatre. It is a sonnet in the collection which he has entitled "Idea," and which no successful dramatist will read without some happy emotion.

> "In pride of wit, when *high desire of fame*
> *Gave life and courage to my labouring pen*,
> And first the sound and vertue of my name
> Were grace and credit in the ears of men;
> With those the *thronged theaters* that presse,
> I in *the circuit* for the Lawrell strove,
> Where the *full praise*, I freely must confesse,
> In heate of blood and modest minde might move;
> *With* SHOWTS *and* CLAPS *at every little* PAWSE,
> When the *prowd* ROUND *on everie side hath rung*."

The ample roll might not be tedious, though it were long, had we aught to record of this brotherhood of genius: but nothing we know of the much-applauded and much-ridiculed and most ingenious JOHN LYLY; nothing of the searching and cynical MARSTON; nothing of the inventive and flowing DECKER; nothing of the unpremeditated strains of the fertile

HEYWOOD; nor of the pathetic WEBSTER; nor of MIDDLETON, from whose "Witch" Shakspeare borrowed his incantations; nor of ROWLEY, whom Shakspeare aided; nor of the equal and grave MASSINGER; nor of the lonely and melancholy FORD.

Among these poets stood he, in whose fire the Greek of Homer burned clear in his Homeric English. Chapman often caught the ideas of Homer, and went on writing Homerically, at once the translator and the original. One may read in that "most reverend aspect" of his the lofty spirit that told how, above all living, was to him the poet's life, when he exclaimed, —

> "The work that I was born to do is done!
> The conclusion
> Makes the beginning of my life; for never
> Let me be said to live, till I live ever." *

The plays were bought by a manager for his company, and each company was jealously alive that no other should perform their purchased copies. These monopolists were, therefore, anxious to suppress the publication of plays, and to smother the fame of their dramatist on their own boards. The players, who were usually copartners, at the sovereign pleasure of their proprietorship, unmercifully mutilated the

* When Pope translated Homer, Chapman's version lay open before him. The same circumstance, as I have witnessed, occurred with the last translator, — Mr. Sotheby. Charles Lamb justly appreciated Chapman, when he observed that "he would have made a great epic poet, if indeed he has not abundantly shown himself to be one; for his "Homer" is not so properly a translation as the stories of Achilles and Ulysses rewritten. The earnestness and passion which he has put into every part of these poems would be incredible to a reader of more modern translations."

The striking portrait of Chapman is prefixed to Mr. Singer's elegant edition of this poet's version of Homer's "Battle of the Frogs and the Mice," and the Hymns. His "Iliad," collated with his last corrections and alterations, well deserves to fill a stationary niche in our poetical library. Chapman has, above all our poets, most boldly, or most gracefully, struck out those "words that burn," — compound epithets.

tender limbs of their poet,* or, what was not less usual, made him for ever ridiculous, by foisting in whole scenes of the basest humor, as clap-traps for "the groundlings," and which sometimes were perpetuated in the prompter's copy. Such scenes of ribaldry have tainted even immortal pages, and have provoked much idle criticism, either to censure or to palliate.

As the stock-copies increased, and lost their novelty, they required some new-fashioning. The tarnished piece was drawn out of the theatrical wardrobe: once in vogue, and now neglected, the body, not yet moth-eaten, might be flounced with new scenes. To this humiliated state of jobbers of old plays were reduced the most glorious names in our drama's roll. Shakspeare, Jonson, and Massinger sate down to this obscure drudgery. Our earlier commentators on Shakspeare had no suspicion that even his plays were often *rifacimentos* of neglected stock-copies. When the account-books of Henslow, the manager, were discovered at Dulwich College, they supplied some strange literary anecdotes. This entry appears: "Lent to Bengemen Jonson forty shillings for his adycions to Jeronymo," which was an old favorite play of Kyd's. Again, more lent for "new adycions." When Hawkins republished "Jeronymo" in his collection, he triumphantly rejected these "adycions," as being "foisted in by the players." This he had detected by collation with the first edition: further his critical decision could not advance. The Diary of Henslow was fatal to the matter-of-fact critic: the passages he had ejected relate to the madness of Hieronymo for the murder of his son. The learned poet never wrote with such a Shakspearian force

* An original leaf of the manuscript of one of Marlowe's plays, in the possession of Mr. J. P. Collier, is a singular literary curiosity. On a collation with the printed copy, the mutilations are not only excessive, but betray a defective judgment. An elaborate speech, designed by the poet to develop the character of the famous Guise, was cut down to four meagre lines. - *Annals of the Stage*, iii. 134

Our early dramatists not only jobbed in this chance-work but established a copartnership for the quicker manufacture; and we find sometimes three or four poets working on one play, share and share alike, or in due proportions, whenever they could peaceably adjust their mutual celebrities.* Could we penetrate into the recesses of the theatre of that day, I suspect we should discover civil wars in the commonwealth. These partners sometimes became irreconcilably jealous. Jonson and Marston and Decker, who had zealously co-operated, subsequently exhausted their quivers at one another. Greene was incurably envious of Marlowe, and got his friend Nash to be as much so, till Marlowe and Nash compromised, and wrote together the tragedy of "Dido," with the affection of twins. Lofty Chapman flashed an "invective" against proud "Ben;" and when Anthony Munday, a copious playwright, was hailed by a critic as "the best plotter," Jonson, in his next *play*, ridiculed "the best plotter." Can we forget that in "Eastward Hoe," one of the most amusing of our old comedies, whence Hogarth borrowed the hint of his "Idle and Industrious Apprentices," by Jonson, Chapman, and Marston, the madness of Ophelia is poorly ridiculed? It would seem that a junction of the poets usually closed in a rupture.

Our first tragedy and comedy were moulded on the classical model; for both the writers were university-men. It is, however, remarkable that the greater number of our early

* Charles Lamb has alluded to this fact; and, in one of his moments of enthusiasm, exclaims, "This was the noble practice of these times." Would not the usual practice of a man of genius, working his own drama, be "nobler"? We presume the unity of feeling can only emanate from a single mind. In the instance here alluded to, we should often deceive ourselves if we supposed, from the combination of names which appear on the old titlepages, that those who are specified were always *simultaneously employed* in the new direction of the same play. Poets were often called in to alter the old or to supply the new, which has occasioned incongruities which probably were not to be found in the original state.

dramatists who now occupy our attention were also members of the universities, had taken a degree, and some were skilful Greek scholars.* How then did it happen, that not one of these scholars submitted to the artificial apparatus, and the conventional code of their legislator, the Stagyrite? We observe a sudden revolution in the dramatic art.

Our poets had not to address scholastic critics; for, as one of them has delivered himself, —

> "They would have GOOD PLAYS, and not produce
> Such musty fopperies of antiquity;
> Which do not suit the humorous age's back
> With clothes in fashion."

It was their business to raise up that multiform shape which alone could win the mutable attention of a very mixed audience. At once they clung to the human nature before them; they ran through all the chords of the passions: mingling the comic with the tragic, they struck out a new course in their inartificial drama. They were, at all events, inventors; for they had no prototypes. Every poet was an original, *more suo*, mindless of the encumbering alloy; for they knew that the vein they had opened was their own, and confided too frequently in its abundance to find its richness. It was a spontaneous burst which broke forth in the excitement of these new times, and which, as far as the careless prodigality of the vernacular genius is concerned, in the raciness of its idiom, and the flow of its conceptions, and the freshness of its imagery, can never return; for the virgin genius of a people must pass away!

Valueless, indeed, was our early drama held by graver men. Sir Thomas Bodley wholly rejected from his great library all plays, "to avoid stuffing it with baggage-books;" but more particularly objected to "ENGLISH PLAYS, *as unlike those of other nations*, which are esteemed for learning

* Greene, Nash, Lyly, Peele, and Marston were from the university: Marlowe and Chapman were exquisite translators from the Greek.

the languages; and many of them," he adds, "are compiled by men of great wisdom and learning."

The perplexities of the founder of the noble Bodleian Library were occasioned by our dramatic illegitimacy: we had no progenitors, and we were not spell-bound by the three unities. Originality in every kind startled the mind which could only pace in the trammels of authority. On the principle Bodley rejected our *English plays*, he also condemned our *English philosophy;* and Lord Bacon rallied him on that occasion by a good-humored menace of "a cogitation against libraries," which must have made the cheeks of the great collector of books tingle. Bodley with excellent truth described himself as "the carrier's horse which cannot blench the beaten way in which I was trained."

In banishing the productions of the national genius from that national library which his hand had proudly erected, little was Bodley able to conceive, that a following generation would dwell on those very "English plays," would appeal to them as the depositories of our language, and as the secret history of the people, — a history which no historian writes, — their modes of thinking in the transition of their manners, in the vicissitudes of their passions, and in the scenes of their politics and their religion; and, what most would have astonished our great *bibliophile*, that collectors like himself, presuming on "their wisdom and learning," would devote their vigils to collate, to comment, and to edit "these baggage-books of English plays;" and, above all, that foreigners, after a century or two, should enrich their own literature by the translations, or enlarge their own genius by the imitations, of these bold originals.

By emancipating themselves from the thraldom of Greece and the servility of Rome, our dramatists have occasioned later critics to separate our own from the classical drama of antiquity. They are placed in "the Romantic" school, — a novel technical term, not individually appropriate, and which

would be less ambiguous if considered as "the Gothic."* At the time when Italy and France had cast themselves into thraldom by adhering to the contracted models of the drama of antiquity, two nations in Europe, without any intercourse whatever (for even translation was not yet a medium), were spontaneously creating a national drama accordant with the experience, the sympathies, and the imagination of their people. The theatre was to be a mirror of enchantment, a movable reflection of themselves. These two nations were England and Spain. The dramatic history of Spain is the exact counterpart which perfectly tallies with our own. In Spain, the learned began with imitations and translations of the ancient classics: but these formal stately dramas were so coldly received, that they fell into desuetude, and were succeeded by those whose native luxuriant genius reached to the secret hearts of their audience; and it was this second race, not indeed so numerous as our own, who closed with the Spanish Shakspeare.† This literary phenomenon, though now apparent, was not perceived when it was occurring.

Every taste has delivered its variable decision on these our old plays, each deciding by its own standard; and the variance is occasioned not always by deficiency in critical judgment, but, in the very nature of the object of criticism, in the inherent defect of our ancient drama itself. These old plays will not endure criticism. They were not written for critics, and they now exist even in spite of criticism. They were all

* The term, "the Romantic school," is derived from the *langue Romans*, or *Romane;* under which comprehensive title all the modern languages may be included, formed, as they are, out of the wrecks of the Latin or *Roman* language. However this may apply to the origin of the *languages*, the term is not expressive of the *genius* of the people. In the common sense of the term "Romantic," the "Æneid" of Virgil is as much a romance as that of Arthur and his knights. The term "Romantic school" is, therefore, not definite. By adopting the term *Gothic*, in opposition to the *Classical*, we fix the origin, and indicate the species.

† Bouterwek's Hist. of Spanish Lit., i. 128.

experiments of the freest genius, rarely placed under favoring circumstances. They were emanations of strong but short conceptions, poured forth in haste and heat; they blotted their lines as rarely as we are told did Shakspeare; they revelled in their first conceptions, often forgotten in their rapid progress: the true inspiration was lodged in their breasts; the hidden volcano has often burst through its darkness, and flamed through a whole scene; for often have they written as Shakspeare wrote. We may look in them for entire scenes, felicitous lines, and many an insulated passage, — studies for a poet: anthologies have been drawn from these elder dramatists.* We may perceive how this sudden generation of poets,

* Two of these collections are to be valued.

COTGRAVE'S "English Treasury of Wit and Language," 1655. He neglected to furnish the names of the dramatic writers from whom he drew the passages. Oldys, with singular diligence, succeeded in recovering these numerous sources, which I transcribed from his manuscript notes. Oldys's copy should now repose in the library of Mr. Douce, given to the Bodleian.

A collection incomparably preferable to all preceding ones is "the British Muse, or a Collection of Thoughts — Moral, Natural, or Sublime — of our English Poets who flourished in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," by THOMAS HAYWARD, gent., 1732, in three volumes. It took a new title, not a new edition, as "the Quintessence of English Poetry." Such a title could not recommend itself. The prefatory matter was designed for a critical history of all these anthologies, and was the work of Oldys; but it was miserably mangled by Dr. Campbell, then the Aristarchus of the booksellers, to save print and paper! Our literary antiquary has vented, in a manuscript note, his agony and his indignation. He had also greatly assisted the collector: the circuit is wide and copious, and there is not a name of note which does not appear in these volumes. The ethical and poetic powers of our old dramatic poets, as here displayed, I doubt could be paralleled by our literary neighbors. We were a thoughtful people at the time that our humor was luxuriant; as lighter gayety was, from the first, the national inheritance of France.

Of this collection, says Oldys, "Wherever you open it, you are in the heart of your subject. Every leaf includes many lessons, and is a system of knowledge in a few lines. The merely speculative may here find experience; the flattered, truth; the diffident, resolution," &c. For my part, I think of these volumes as highly as Oldys himself.

But what has occasioned the little success of these collections of single passages and detached beauties, like collections of proverbs, is the confusion

some of whose names are not familiar to us, have moulded our language with the images of their fancy, and strengthened it by the stability of their thoughts.

of their variety. We are pleased at every glance; till the eye, in weariness, closes over the volume which we neglect to re-open.

CHARLES LAMB'S "Specimens of English Dramatic Poets" is of deeper interest. He was a nobler workman, and he carries us on through whole scenes by a true unerring emotion. His was a poetical mind laboring in poetry.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE vicissitudes of the celebrity of Shakespeare may form a chapter in the philosophy of literature and the history of national opinions. Shakespeare was destined to have his dramatic faculty contested by many successful rivals, to fall into neglect, to be rarely acted and less read, to appear barbarous and unintelligible, to be even discarded from the glorious file of dramatists by the anathemas of hostile criticism; and finally, in the resurrection of genius, (a rare occurrence!) to emerge into universal celebrity. This literary history of Shakespeare is an incident in the history of the human mind singular as the genius which it relates to. The philosopher now contemplates the phenomenon of a poet who in his peculiar excellence is more poetical than the poets of every other people. We have to track the course of this prodigy, and, if possible, to comprehend the evolutions of this solitary luminary. It is knowledge which finally must direct our feelings in the operations of the mind as well as in the phenomena of nature. We are conscious that even the anomalous is regulated by its own proper motion, and that there is nothing in human nature so arbitrary as to stand by itself so completely insulated as to be an effect without a cause.

SHAKESPEARE is a poet who is always now separated from other poets, and the only one, except POPE, whose thoughts are familiar to us as household words. His eulogy has exhausted the language of every class of enthusiasts, the learned and the unlearned, the profound and the fantastical. The

writings of this greatest of dramatists are, as once were those of Homer, a Bible, whence we receive those other revelations of man, and of all that concerns man. There was no excess of wonder and admiration when HURD declared that "this astonishing man is the most original THINKER and SPEAKER since the days of HOMER."

The halo which surrounds the poetic beatitude has almost silenced criticism in its devotion: but a literary historian may not at all times be present in the choir of votaries; his labors lie outwards among the progressive opinions of a people, nor is he free to pass over what may seem paradoxical if it lies in his way.

The universal celebrity of Shakespeare is comparatively of recent origin: received, rejected, and revived, we must ascertain the alternate periods, and we must look for the causes of the neglect as well as the popularity of the poet. We may congratulate ourselves on the numerous escapes of our national bard from the oblivion of his dramatic brothers. The history and the works of Shakespeare, and perhaps the singularity of the poet's character in respect to his own writings, are some of the most startling paradoxes in literary history.

Malone describes Shakespeare as "the great poet whom Nature framed to disregard the wretched models that were set before him, and to create a drama from his own native and original stores." This cautious but creeping commentator, notwithstanding that he had often labored to prove the contrary, gayly shot this arrow drawn from the quiver of Dryden, who has delivered very contradictory notions of Shakespeare. Veritably — for we are now writing historically — Shakespeare never "created our drama, disregarding the wretched models before him;" far from this! the great poet had those models always before him, and worked upon them: no poet has so freely availed himself of the inventions of his predecessors; and, in reality, many of the dramas of Shakespeare had been written before he WROTE

It cannot be denied that our great poet never exercised his invention in the fables of his dramas: thus he spared himself half the toil of his work. He viewed with the prophetic eye of genius the old play or the old story, and at once discovered all its capabilities; he saw at once all that it had, and all that it had not: its characterless personages he was confident that he could quicken with breath and action; and that his own vein, allowed to flow along the impure stream, would have the force to clear the current, and to expand its own lucid beauty.

Had not the felicitous genius of our bard revelled in this facility of adopting and adapting the ready-made inventions of many a luckless playwright, we might have lost our Shakespeare; for he never wrote for us, but for his little theatre. He had no leisure to afford whole days in constructing plots for plays, nor much troubled himself with those which he followed closely even to a fault; nor did the quickness of his genius neglect a solitary thought, nor lose a fortunate expression. To what extent were these borrowings from manuscript plays, we cannot even surmise: we have one specimen of Shakespeare's free use of whatever the poet's judgment caught, in those copious passages which he transplanted from North's "Plutarch" and Holinshed's "Chronicles," lending their words his own music.

One of his commentators, George Steevens, published six old plays on which Shakespeare had grounded six of his own; but this rash act was in the early days of the commentatorship: Steevens must soon have discovered the inconvenience of printing unreadable dramas, to exhibit the concealed industry of the mighty bard. The spells of Shakespeare did not hang on the artificial edifice of his fable: he looked abroad for mankind, and within his own breast for all the impulses of the beings of his imagination. All he required was a scene: then the whole "sphere of humanity," as Jonson expressed it, lies wide before him. There was a Jew before the

Merchant of Venice; a shrew had been tamed before Katherine by Petruchio; a King Lear and his three daughters, before the only one the world knows; and a tragical Hamlet philosophized like Seneca, as the satirical Nash told, before our Shakespeare's: but this list is needless; for it would include every drama he has left us. Even the beings of his creation lie before him in their embryon state. His creative faculty never required more than a suggestion. The prototype of the wonderful Caliban has not hitherto been discovered; but the fairies of the popular mythology become the creatures of his own imagination. Middleton first opened the incantations of "the witches." The Hecate of Middleton is a mischief-brooding hag, gross and tangible; and her "spirits, black, white, and gray," with her "devil-toad, devil-ram, devil-cat, and devil-dam," disturb their spells by the familiar drollery of their names and their vulgar instincts. Out of this ordinary domestic witchcraft, the mightier poet raised "the weird sisters," —

> "That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth
> And yet are on't," —

nameless, bodiless, vanishing shadows!

> "And what seemed corporal
> Melted as breath into the wind."

The dramatic personages which seem to me peculiar to Shakespeare, and in which he evidently revelled, serving his purposes on very opposite occasions, are his clowns and domestic fools. Yet his most famous comic personage, the fat knight, was the rich graft on the miserable scion of Sir John Oldcastle, in an old play: the slight hint of "a mere pampered glutton" was idealized into that inimitable variety of human nature combined in one man, at once so despicable and so delightful!

The life of our poet remains almost a blank, and his very

name a subject of contention.* Of that singular genius who is now deemed the national bard, we can only positively ascertain that the place of his birth was that of his death; a circumstance which, for a poet, is some evidence of his domestic

* Posterity is even in some danger of losing the real name of our great dramatic poet. In the days of Shakespeare, and long after, proper names were written down as the ear caught the sound, or they were capriciously varied by the owner. It is not therefore strange that we have instances of eminent persons writing the names of intimate friends and of public characters in a manner not always to be recognized. Of this we are now furnished with the most abundant evidence, which was not sufficiently adverted to in the early times of our commentators.

The autographs we possess of our national bard are unquestionably written SHAKSPERE, according to the pronunciation of his native town: there the name was variously written, — even in the same public document, — but always regulated by the dialectical orthoepy. The marriage license of the poet, recovered in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for September, 1836, offers a striking evidence of the viciousness of the pronunciation, and the utter carelessness with which names were written; for there we find it SHAGSPERE.

That the poet himself considered that the genuine name was SHAKESPEARE, accordant with his own (a spear, the point upward), seems certain, notwithstanding his compliance with the custom of his country; for his "Rape of Lucrece," printed by himself in 1594, in the first edition bears the name of WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE; as also does the "Venus and Adonis," that first heir of his invention: these first editions of his juvenile poems were doubtlessly anxiously scrutinized by the youthful bard. In the literary metropolis, the name was so pronounced. Bancroft has this allusion in his Epigrams, — "To Shakespeare: " —

> "Thou hast so used thy pen, or shook thy speare,
> That poets startle."

The well-known allusion of Robert Greene to a shake scene confirms the pronunciation. I now supply one more evidence, — that of Thomas Heywood, the intimate of Shakespeare and his brother dramatists: he, like some others, has printed the name with a hyphen, which I transcribe from the volume open before me: —

> "Mellifluous Shake-speare."
>
> *Hierarchie of Angels*, 206.

The question resolves itself into this: Is the name of our great bard to descend to posterity with the barbaric curt shock of SHAKSPERE, the twang of a provincial corruption? or, following the writers of the Elizabethan age, shall we maintain the restoration of the euphony and the truth of the name of SHAKESPEARE?

prosperity: but the glorious interval of existence, how and all he performed on the stage of human life, no one observed as differing from his fellows of the company, and he of all men the least; and of his productions, wherein we are to find every excellence to which any poet has reached, our scepticism is often at work to detect what is Shakespearian among that which cannot be.

Of the idle traditions of the youth of Shakespeare, Malone, after "foraging for anecdotes" during half a century, has painfully satisfied us that all which so many continued to repeat was apocryphal. Having with his own eyes ascertained that Sir Thomas Lucy had no park, he closed with his famous corollary, that "therefore he could have no deer to be stolen.' But other parks and other deer were liable to the mischance of furnishing venison for a young deer-fancier to treat his friends; and Sir Thomas Lucy, probably, was Justice Shallow on this occasion to the poetic stripling. The other circumstances of the poet's early life, too well known to repeat, may stand on the same ground. Personal facts may come down to us confused, inaccurate, and mistaken; but they do not therefore necessarily rest on no foundation. The invention of such irrelevant circumstances seems to be without a motive; and, though the propagators of gossip are strange blunderers, they rarely aspire to be original inventors. We are not concerned with such tales; for there is nothing in them which is peculiar to the idiosyncrasy of the great poet.

The first noticeable incident in the life of Shakespeare was his marriage in 1582, in his eighteenth year: the nuptials of the poet seem an affair of domestic convenience, rather than a poetical incident in "the romance of life."

In 1586, being only twenty-two years of age, Shakespeare quitted home for the metropolis.

At this critical moment of his life, which Malone sought for in despair, we should have remained in darkness, had not the unfortunate and intrepid industry of the most devoted enthu-

siast of the Shakespearian school lifted his steady torch.* Shakespeare arrived at the theatre, not to hold the horses of gentlemen, as was so long reported, without, for he had a more friendly interest within, doors. There he joined a neighbor in his shire, Richard Burbage, who subsequently became the renowned actor of the future Shakespeare's creations; and likewise Thomas Greene, his townsman, and no inferior actor and poet. It is hardly a conjecture to presume that their friendly invitations had tempted our youthful adventurer to join their company. In three years, Shakespeare obtained shares in the theatre; which multiplied every year, till he became the joint-proprietor with Burbage. The friendship of the actor and the dramatist was a golden bond, when each had conferred on the other their mutual popularity. The plays of Shakespeare were higher favorites with the public during the lifetime of this Garrick of the poet's own days; and the renowned actor was so charmed by his own success, that he perpetuated among his daughters the delightful name of Juliet, which reminded him, with pride, of his own exquisite Romeo.

Shakespeare proved a closer and a more refined observer of the art of acting than Nature had enabled him to show himself as an actor, by practising his own professional precepts. Two actors, who long survived the poet, recorded that he had critically instructed the one to enact Hamlet, and the other Henry the Eighth.†

How in an indifferent actor like Shakespeare was betrayed those latent dramatic faculties by which he was one day to be the delight of that stage which he could not tread, remains a secret which the poet has not told. But whether it was by accident, or in some happy hour, we know not, that Shakespeare, in conning the manuscript of some wretched drama,

* Mr. J. Payne Collier, in his "New Facts regarding the Life of Shakespeare."

† Roscius Anglicanus. They were Richard Burbage and John Lowin

felt the glorious impulse which prompted the pen to strike out whole passages, and to interpolate whole scenes: that moment was the obscure birth of his future genius. How he was employed at this unknown era of his life, the peevish jealousy of a brother of the craft has curiously informed us.

When Shakespeare was a name yet scarcely known, save to that mimetic world tenanted by playwrights, it appears that he was there sustaining an active and secret avocation. The great bard had been serving a silent apprenticeship to the dramatic Muse, by trying his hand on the old stockpieces which lay in the theatrical treasury, and further venturing his repolishing touches on the new. Marlowe, Lodge, and Peele had submitted to his soft pencillings or his sharp pruning-hook. The actors were often themselves a sort of poets, and would compete with those who were only poets; and, in pricing the hasty wares, would often have them fashioned to their liking. Alluding to the treatment the dramatists were enduring from their masters, Robert Greene indignantly addressed his peers. This curious passage, first discovered by Tyrwhit, has been often quoted, and indispensably must be once more; for it tells us how Shakespeare, in 1592, had been fully employed within six years of his arrival at the metropolis. Greene desires his friends would no longer submit to the actors. "Do not trust those burrs, who have sought to cleave to us all; those puppets that speak from our mouths, those antics garnished in our colors. Is it not strange that I, to whom they have all been beholding, is it not like that you, to whom they all, too, have been beholding, shall, were ye in that case I am now, be both of them at once forsaken?* Yes, trust them not! There is *an upstart crow beautified with our feathers*, that, with *his tyger's heart wrapt in a player's hide*,

* Greene was then lying on his last pallet of rhyme and misery, dictating this sad legacy of "a groat's worth of wit bought with a million of repentance."

supposes he is as well able to *bombast** *out a blank verse* as the best of you, and, being *an absolute Johannes Factotum,* is, in his own conceit, the only SHAKE-SCENE in a country."

"The absolute Johannes Factotum," "the only shake-scene," and "the crow beautified with their feathers," are one person; but "the tyger's heart wrapt in a player's hide" particularly points out that person. It is, in fact, a parody of a line composed by this batch of poets in one of their dramas, "the Contention of the Two Houses of York and Lancaster;" and which, with many others, Shakespeare had wholly appropriated. In the third part of "King Henry the Sixth," in act i., scene iv., it stands as Peele or Greene had originally composed it:—

"O tyger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide!"

This attack on our untiger-like Shakespeare turns poor Greene into an enraged wasp, peevish and mortified at the Shakespearian hand which had often larded his leanness, or scarified his tumidities. Greene charges Shakespeare with altering the plays of himself, Marlowe, Lodge, and Peele, and then claiming all the merit of the work!†

Our great bard was not insensible to the fancy of his querulous libeller, since it was on Greene's "Dorastus and Fawnia" Shakespeare founded his "Winter's Tale;" as he took his "As you Like it" from Lodge's "Rosalynd," whose very name he preserved. Thus borrowing from the writings of his unfortunate and reckless brothers of Parnassus, he has made immortal, works which have long expired.

The active employment of Shakespeare among the old plays was so well known at the time, that, when his name became familiar to the public, the printers were often eager to obtain

* *Bombast* is not here used in the present application of the term, in a depreciating sense, but is a simile derived from the cotton used in stuffing out or quilting the fashionable dresses.

† Collier's "New Facts," 13; Dyce's edition of "Greene's Dramatic Works."

the original neglected plays in their meagre condition, to avail themselves of the popularity of the Shakespearian *rifacimentos* Fraud and deception were evidently practised on the uncritical readers. One of these cunning publishers issued the old play of "the Contention of the Two Houses," &c., as *newly corrected and enlarged* by William Shakespeare; which was true as it was acted on the stage, but false in the copy of the elder dramatist which was republished. In this manner, several plays not only bear the consecrating name of Shakespeare, but seven which are now discarded from his works, appeared in the edition of Rowe: in some of these, the hand of Shakespeare appears to have been discerned; and it has been suggested by Mr. Collier, an experienced critic in the history of the drama, that it is possible that all the plays of Shakespeare have not yet been given to the world.

In the second and third parts of "King Henry the Sixth" (for the first was placed in his volume merely to complete the historical series), Shakespeare made ample use of several dramas; and Malone, whose microscopic criticism obtained for him the sarcastic cognomen of "Minutius Felix," by an actual scrutiny, which we may well believe cost him the most anxious pains, computed the lines of these dramas, and has passed his word, that, of six thousand and forty-three lines, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-one were written by some author who preceded Shakespeare, two thousand three hundred and seventy-three were formed by him on the foundation laid by his predecessors, and one thousand eight hundred and forty-nine lines were entirely our poet's own composition. Malone has even contrived to distinguish them in the text: those which Shakespeare *adopted* are printed in the usual manner; the speeches which he *altered* or expanded are marked by inverted commas; and to all the lines entirely *composed* by himself, asterisks are prefixed. A critical reader may derive a curious gratification by attending to this novel text of our national poet; the only dramatist to whom this singularity has ever

occurred, and on whose writings this anomalous operation could have been performed.

Shakespeare was more conversant with these preceding dramatists, most of whose writings have perished, than we can ever discover; but it is fortunate for us that his creative faculties brooded over such a world of chaotic genius. He scrupled not to appropriate those happier effusions which were not only worthy of his own genius, but are not distinguishable from it. Sometimes he only retouched, sometimes he nobly amplified, expanding a slight hint into some glorious passage, and elevating a creeping dialogue into an impassioned scene. His judgment was always the joint-workman of his fancy.

Who by the interior evidence could have conjectured that the following Shakesperian effusion, musical with his own music, was, in truth, a mere transcription from an old play of "Richard, Duke of York," whose author remains unknown? I mark by Italics the rejections of Shakespeare. In the slight emendations, we may observe that our poet consulted his ear; but, in the first verse, he has chosen a more expressive term.

"Doves will peck in *rescue* (safeguard) of their brood.
Unreasonable creatures feed their young;
And though man's face be fearful to their eyes,
Yet, in protection of their tender ones,
Who hath not seen them, even with those *same* wings
Which *they have sometimes* used *in* fearful flight,
(Which sometime they have used with fearful flight),
Make war with him that climbed unto their nest,
Offering their own lives in their young's defence?"

The speech of Queen Margaret, in the third part of "Henry the Sixth," act v., scene iv., in the old play, consisted of a single metaphor included in twelve lines. The single metaphor was not rejected; but it is amplified and nobly sustained through forty lines in the queen's animated address to the lords: —

"The mast but now blown overboard,
The cable broke, the holding anchor lost," &c.

The two celebrated scenes in which the dead body of the murdered Duke of Gloster is placed before us, with such precision of horror, minutely appalling, and of the raving despair of Cardinal Beaufort so awfully depicted by his death, "making no sign," are splendors whose igniting sparks flew out of the ashes of old plays, one of "King John," and the other of "the Contentions of the Two Houses," and of the chronicles. But still these sublime descriptions and these fearful images are the inspirations of Shakespeare: their truth of nature, and the completeness of the purpose of the poet, the bare originals could not impart.

These ascertained evidences may suffice — it would be tedious to proceed with their abundance — of the studiousness and propriety of Shakespeare in his adoptions and adaptations of our earlier drama. Dr. Farmer was the first to discover that these plays were not written *originally* by Shakespeare; but that able researcher was not then aware of what only the progress of discovery could demonstrate, — that hardly a single drama of our national bard can be deemed to have been of his own original invention.

While thus occupied in altering and writing old plays for his own theatre, in 1593 first appeared to the world the name of William Shakespeare, in the dedication to the Earl of Southampton of his "Venus and Adonis." The poet has called this poem of a few pages "the first heir of my invention." For him who had already written much, the expression is singular; and it looks like a tacit acknowledgment, that the poet considered that the five or six plays which he had already set forth had really no claim to "*his* invention." And the dedication betrays the tremulousness of a virgin effort: "Should this first heir prove deformed," declared our poet in his own Shakespearian diction, "I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, and never after *ear so barren a land*, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest." The poet, doubtless, was induced to proceed; for the following year, 1594, produced his

"Lucrece." He described his first poem as "unpolished lines;" and he still calls his second his "untutored lines." As the former, so likewise is the present dedicated to the same earl. The fervor of the style indicates the influence of the patron, and the singleness of the devotion of the poet, who tells his noble patron, "What I have done is yours, and what I have to do is yours." The humble actor's intercourse with his noble friend is a remarkable incident; for the poet was not yet famous when he prefixed his name to these poems. This earl, then in his youth, we learn was attached to theatrical amusements; and it has been ingeniously conjectured, that the princely donation of a thousand pounds, which the peer presented to the poet, — a tradition which Davenant had handed down, — may have occurred, if it ever happened, in the interval between the publication of these two poems.

The Ovidian deliciousness of "Venus and Adonis," and the more solemn narrative of "Tarquin and Lucrece," early obtained celebrity among the youthful and impassioned generation. Shakespeare was long renowned as the amatory poet of the nation by many who had not learned to distinguish the bard among his dramatic brethren. Numerous editions of these poems confirm their popularity, and the public voice resounded from the lyres of many poets.

No poet more successfully opened his career than Shakespeare by these two popular poems; but it is remarkable that he made no farther essay with a view to permanent fame, which, as it would seem to us, he never imagined he was to derive from his dramas.

Meres, a critic of the day, has informed us, that, in 1598, some sonnets by Shakespeare were in circulation among his friends. These were effusions of the hour; and possibly some may have been descriptive of his own condition. In 1599, a poetical collection, called "the Passionate Pilgrim," appeared under the name of Shakespeare; and ten years afterwards another, entitled "Shakespeare's Sonnets," was given to

the world: but, as poetical miscellanies were formed in those days by publishers who were not nice in the means they used to procure manuscripts, it is quite uncertain what are genuine and what may be the composition of other writers in these collections.

In "the Passionate Pilgrim," some critics find difficulty in tracing the hand of the poet; and we accidentally discover by the complaint of Heywood, a congenial dramatist, that there were two of his poems in one edition of this collection; and we know that there were also other poems by Marlowe and Barnefield and others. Heywood tells us that Shakespeare was greatly offended at this licentious use of his name;* but he must have been imperturbably careless on such matters, otherwise he would not have suffered three editions of this spurious miscellany.

The fate of "the Sonnets" is remarkable. Steevens boldly ejected them from the poet's works, declaring that the strongest act of Parliament that could be framed could not compel their perusal. Shall we ascribe to this caustic wit a singular deficiency in his judicial decisions, or look to some other cause for the ejection of these sonnets, which have become of late the subject of so much curious inquiry? An ingenious attempt has been recently made to form what is called an autobiography of the poet, by stringing together the sonnets in six distinct poems: this would be sufficient evidence that they had never passed under the eye of the author, and that he could have had no concern in a publication which has thus mutilated his living members. This bookseller's collection remains for more than one cause an ambiguous volume.

Shakespeare now stands alone the national bard: but hoary Time, which has decreed who are his inferiors, once saw them his equals; and, when he mingled with his fellows, possibly the world looked up to a Coryphæus whose name was not Shake-

* Heywood's "Apology for Actors." — The epistle to his bookseller, at the end.

speare. Two inquiries interest us: Was the pre-eminence of our national bard acknowledged by his contemporaries? — and what cause occasioned the utter neglect of his own reputation?

Among his contemporaries, Shakespeare could not possess the pre-eminence of the present age; for who were then to be his judges? — his rivals, or his audience? Our gentle Shakespeare, as Jonson called him, perhaps at no time appreciated his own genius at its peculiar excellence, and therefore was not likely to discover his solitary pre-eminence among a formidable crowd of rivals; nor were they likely to acknowledge in their friend "Will" the prevailing charm which has now subdued the world. They have even occasionally darted a shaft of ridicule or a sharp parody at our immortal tragedian; the madness of Hamlet and Ophelia could serve these dramatic writers as a subject for raillery;* and the airy Fletcher, who would have emulated Shakespeare, was guilty of sneering at his inimitable master. The learned JONSON was apt to be critical; CHAPMAN cast his Greek glances haughtily on the vernacular bard; MARSTON was caustic; and DRAYTON, his intimate, who had composed two or three tragedies, could hardly perceive any supremacy in SHAKESPEARE, and, for us, seems parsimoniously to commend his "comic vein" as strong —

> "As any one that trafficked with the stage;" —

while BEN JONSON is hailed as —

> "Lord of the theatre, who could bear
> The buskin, as the sock, away."

It was not from his dramatic brothers that SHAKESPEARE could have discovered his more than supremacy; and, while the brotherhood had family quarrels among themselves, Shake-

* In the comedy of "Eastward Ho!" the joint production of Jonson, Marlowe, and Chapman, Shakespeare is ridiculed, particularly the madness of Hamlet and Ophelia.

speare appears never to have moved offensively or defensively. Gifford tells us that he has never mentioned one of his contemporaries with commendation; and only once appears, with Jonson and others, to have contributed some commendatory lines to the volume of an obscure and whimsical poet.* As Shakespeare did not deal in this literary traffic of that day, he has received fewer tributes than some of the meanest of our poets. But if Shakespeare has not noticed any of his associates, neither has the poet ever alluded to himself in his works. He never exults in his triumphs, nor is querulous on those who oppugned them.

With his audience he was unquestionably popular: we hear of none of his plays having been condemned; though such mischances are recorded of his rivals, and, above all, of his great compeer Jonson. We know that he was fortunate in the personation of his characters; and those natural touches, listened to on the spot, when Nature was left free to act her part, fell on contagious and instantaneous sympathies. But, if the poet charmed by his "many-colored life," his very faults were not less delightful. His audience revelled in bustle and bombast; and it is possibly in compliance with their stirring unchastised taste that we have received so much of his rude originals.

Our poet's recklessness of the fate of his own dramas, and his utter disregard of posterity, is at least one unquestionable fact in the blank page of his life. He was utterly reckless of his personal reputation among his contemporary readers, or otherwise he would not have suffered in his lifetime mutilated dramas, or even their first draughts, surreptitiously procured, to pass under his own name, — huddled pieces without even

* Robert Chester, a fantastical versifier, whose volume is priced in the "Bib. Anglo-Poetica" at £50: but this price was too moderate; for, at the sale of Sir M. Sykes, some ingenious lover of absurd poetry willingly gave £61. 19s. I have not yet seen this extraordinary production, and derive my knowledge only from a specimen in the catalogue.

the divisions of the acts, or crude and ridiculous dramas which he was incapable of having written. These were suicidal acts of his own fame, but they never broke his silence; and even in his retreat from the metropolis, in the leisure of his native bowers of Avon, Shakespeare felt not —

> "That last infirmity of noble minds,
> The spur of fame," —

pricking his patient acquiescence, and disturbing his careless freedom; he issued no protest, he uttered no complaint, against the effrontery of the printers of those days, who published, as "newly corrected by William Shakespeare," old plays which he never wrote; nor did he yield the yearnings of a nurse to those rickety children of the press which passed as his progeny, bearing a name which he never could have deemed immortal. We may trace to its real cause this utter carelessness of his poetical existence.

The horizon of this poet's hopes was bounded by his daily task and his prosperous theatre. Assuredly it was not an ordinary gratification to be conscious that his friend Burbage would call into a real existence "Romeo," "Macbeth," and "Othello," and that the shares of the play-house would in due time be transferred for Warwickshire acres. But his mind was above his condition; and, however the dramatist flourished at "the Globe," Shakespeare himself felt the misery of a degraded station: players and play-writing were held to be equally despicable in that day. This "secret sorrow" he may have himself confided to us: for, in one of "the sonnets," he pathetically laments the compulsion which forced him to the trade of pleasing the public; and this humiliation, or this "stain," as the poet felt it, is illustrated by a novel image. "Chide Fortune," exclaims the bard, —

> "The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
> That did not better for my life provide
> Than public means which public manners breeds:

Thence comes it that *my name receives a brand;*
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, LIKE THE DYER'S HAND."

SHAKESPEARE, in the vigor of life, withdrew from the theatre and the metropolis, returning to his native abode.* "The properties and the wardrobe" were now exchanged for "land and tithes." It is consolatory for us to have ascertained, that our national bard, not yet, however, national, did not participate in the common misery of his noblest brothers. Four years glided away in the tranquil obscurity of his family, till his death! Yet still some old associations survived with the dramatic bard, some reveries of the winter theatre of "the Blackfriars," and the summer Globe "open to the sky;" for we are told that two or three of his noblest dramas were composed during his retirement: and he retained his unbroken love for old companionship to the last; for, by a credible tradition, Shakespeare died of a fever contracted by convivial indulgence at a joyous meeting with his beloved cronies, Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton.

We hear nothing more of SHAKESPEARE, nor of any fragmentary manuscripts: no verses were scattered on his funereal bier, as with Spenser; no sepulchral volume of elegies was gathered, as with Jonson, to consecrate his memory. There was yet no SHAKESPEARE! no national bard! The poet himself could not have favored a friend with a copy of many of his own plays, and probably could not himself have repeated one of those admired soliloquies which we now get by rote. SHAKESPEARE was wholly insensible to the days which were to come. All this to us seems incredible!

Seven years passed away silently, and the nation remained without their Shakespeare; although Jonson, in the very year that the poet had deceased, had set the first example of a collection of dramas made by their own author: the volume

* In 1612 or 13.

sanctioned by his critical learning he dignified as his "works;" a proud distinction, by which he laid himself open to the epigrammatists. At length, in 1623, two of Shakespeare's fellow-comedians, Heminges and Condell, published the first folio edition of "Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies."

These player-editors profess that "they have done this office to the dead only to keep the memory of so worthy a *friend and fellow* alive as was our Shakespeare." Yet their utter negligence shown in "their fellow's" volume is no evidence of their pious friendship, nor perhaps of their care or their intelligence. The publication was not, I fear, so much an offering of affection as a pretext to secure the copyright. Their real design seems to have been to recover the monopoly of ALL the plays, having lost the proprietorship of several which had *stolen abroad in Shakespeare's lifetime;* and, to obtain this crafty purpose, they practised a fraudulent deception.

Fifteen quarto plays the public already possessed: no one appears to have known how they had issued from the study of the poet or the treasury of the theatre. Our player-editors, however, now cautioned their readers that these fifteen plays were a fraud practised on them; that "they were stolen and surreptitious copies maimed and deformed." But what these new editors themselves alleged, they knew was false; for they actually reprinted, unaltered, in their own collection, these declared surreptitious copies. As the reprint became subject to their negligence, these *first editions* were appreciated by Capel and Malone as manuscripts, and by these quarto plays they corrected the text of the folio volume. The mystifying republication of these fifteen quarto plays is a piece of literary history of no common occurrence. CAPEL imagined that the player-editors merely reprinted these very copies which they had so loudly decried to save the labor of transcription. But, looking closer into this affair, we seem to

detect that a double deception was practised. The printers of these plays had secured the copyright by entering them at Stationers' Hall; and, when the folio collection was projected, it was found necessary by Heminges and Condell to admit the proprietors into the copartnership of the volume. Hence their names appear in the titlepage. Malone imagined that this circumstance indicated that the volume of Shakespeare was considered so great a risk, that it required the joint aid of these printers; but the parties only united to secure the monopoly of all the plays.

It therefore results, that the player-editors pretended to warn the public that all the preceding editions were "maimed and deformed;" and the proprietors of these pretended surreptitious editions silently acquiesced in their own condemnation, for the future advantages they expected to derive from their share in the monopoly.

It is quite obvious that the first proprietors of the quarto plays could never have acquired such complete copies without either Shakespeare or his company having furnished them. Yet Shakespeare, if he had connived at these publications, could never have revised the press; another evidence of the utter recklessness of the poet of the fate of his dramas.

The player-editors supplied about twenty new dramas; and, by another adroit deception in their titlepage, they announced that all the dramas were NOW published "according to the original copies."

Alas! where were these "original copies"? The precious autographs could not have endured through many a season the thumbings of "the book-holder" or the prompter. The playhouse copies, carelessly written out in parts for the actors, interpolated with whole scenes, spurious with ribaldry, and extemporaneous nonsense at the caprice of some favorite actor, corrupt with false readings, obscure with distorted alterations, and often omissions of a line, or half a line, to connect or to complete the sense, verse lurking in prose, and metre without

feet, — such were the original sins of the copies despatched in haste to a rapid press; and the writings of Shakespeare come before the world in these hurried proofs from printers among whom a corrector of the press seems to have been unknown. It is in this prolific soil of weeds that many are still too curiously seeking for the genuine text of Shakespeare, perhaps too often irretrievable.* The recollections of these two players were

* Most of our old plays come before us in a corrupt and mangled state. They were often imperfectly caught by the scribe, or otherwise surreptitiously obtained; hurried through the press from some illegible manuscript by a careless printer, who would throw three distinct speeches into the mouth of one character, transpose the names of the *dramatis personæ*, and omit the change of scene; while others again with indiscriminate fidelity, from a stolen transcript of the prompter's book, preserved his private memorandums and directions in the stage-copy. Even in the first folio of Shakespeare, so absent from their work were the player-editors, that "tables and chairs" are introduced, to direct the property-man or the scene-shifters to be in readiness. Verse is printed as prose, to save the expenditure of those small blank spaces which divide those two regions of genius. The dramatists themselves, who probably conceived that they had consigned all their property in their vended plays, never read their own proof-sheets. The reader may form a clear conception of the injuries inflicted on these writers by the existing presentation-copy of Massinger's "Duke of Milan," in which may be seen how the poet, after its publication, indignantly corrected the multiplied and the strange errata. The printer gave this text: —

"Observe and honor her as if the SEAL
Of woman's goodness only dwelt in hers."

The poet corrected this to "the SOUL." The sagacity of an English Bentley could hardly have conjectured the happy emendation: only the poet himself could have supplied it.

Again the printer's text runs: —

"From any lip whose HONOR writ not lord."

The poet corrected this also to "whose OWNER."

These errors of the press are far more important to the readers of Shakespeare than many suspect. "Who knows," exclaimed the acute Gifford, "whether much of the ingenious toil to explain nonsense in the variorum edition of Shakespeare is not absolutely wasted upon mere *errors of the press?*" Not long after this was said, an actual experiment of the kind was made by a skilful printer. This person, during the leisure of eleven years of a French captivity, had found his most constant companion in a Shake-

so inaccurate, that they at first totally omitted the "Troilus and Cressida," which is inserted without pagination; and, with little discrimination in the writings of Shakespeare, preserved the barbarous "Titus Andronicus," evidently one of Marlowe's gigantic pieces, and the old play of "the First Part of Henry the Sixth:" but it is by no means certain that not less than twenty other dramas had various degrees of claims to be included in the works of Shakespeare; such as the suspicious "Pericles." * But the incompetence of these player-editors, even in transcribing from the prompter's copies, was not their only fault. "Will" was but "their fellow;" time had not hallowed him into the national poet: and they themselves had formed no elevated conception of the art of Sophocles and Terence; for, in their dedication to two peers, they express their fear whether their noble patrons from "their greatness would *descend to the reading of* SUCH TRIFLES," — the immortal writings! These unhappy editors seem to

speare.[1] By his own experience of the blunders and the mischances of the typographer, to which we may add also a little sagacity, he recovered some of the lost text. His new readings were accompanied by an explanation of those mechanical accidents which had caused these particular errata. The practical printer mortified the haughty commentator by several felicitous and obvious emendations. The grave brotherhood of black-letter looked askance on such humble ingenuity, and turned against the simple printer. Unluckily for ZACHARY JACKSON, he had the temerity, in the flush of success, of abandoning his type-work, to err in "the dalliance of fancy" into an ambitious Commentary of "seven hundred passages," when seventy had exceeded his fair claim. The commentating printer, therefore, met with the fate of the immortalized cobbler who ventured to criticise beyond the right measure of his last.

* Collier's "Poetical Decameron," i. 52. STEEVENS thought "the Yorkshire Tragedy" to be Shakesperian; and the Rev. ALEXANDER DYCE, struck by the Shakespearian soliloquy of the wife, decides that "it contains passages worthy of his pen." — *Dyce's Mem. of Shakespeare*, xxxi.

[1] So numerous were the English prisoners in France during the persecuting war of Napoleon, and so general was the demand for a "Shakespeare," that more than one edition, I think, was printed by the French booksellers, which I have seen on their literary stalls

reflect back to us the humiliated feelings of Shakespeare and the age on the histrionic art. In that early epoch of our literature, the sock and buskin had indeed been worn by a reckless race.

Charles the First was a lover of the English drama. The king delighted to explore into the manuscript plays which were laid before the master of the revels for his license. Milton has acquainted us that the writings of Shakespeare formed the favorite studies of the monarch.* In the "Iconoclastes," alluding to those writers who have shown the characteristic religious hypocrisy of tyrants, Milton observes, "I shall not instance an abstruse author wherein the king might be less conversant, but one whom we well know was the CLOSET COMPANION of these his solitudes, — William Shakespeare."

This has been considered as a designed reproach, and we are startled by such a style from the author of "Comus" and of "Samson Agonistes." The odious distinction of not referring the king to an abstruse author seems a palpable sneer at the course of the king's reading, who, however, was not deficient in learning; and, in making the king's "closet companion" Shakespeare, Milton too well knew that he was casting the deepest odium on the royal character; for to this poet's then masters, the Puritanical faction, there could be nothing less to be forgiven than a king, and a king in his imprisonments, mockingly here called "these his solitudes," than to be a play-reader! The slur, the gibe, and the covert satire, are, I fear, too obvious. I would gladly have absolved our great bard from this act of treason at least against the majesty of Shakespeare's genius.† Milton had more deeply

* That Shakespeare was the favorite poet of Charles the First is confirmed to the eyes of posterity; for, on the copy the king used, he has written his own name, and left other traces of his pen: the volume now bears also the autograph of George the Third. It is preserved, it is hoped, in the library of the sovereigns of England.

† Milton, however, has been misinterpreted by some modern critics, when, on this occasion, having quoted that passage in "Richard the Third" which

studied Shakespeare than any king whatever; but at this moment his literature was to be stretched on the torture of his politics.

In the history of the celebrity of Shakespeare, this day of royal favor sank amid the national tempest; and the theatre was abolished with the throne.

With the Restoration, the drama returned to the people. Half a century only had elapsed since our poet flourished; but in that half-century our style, with our manners, and modes of feeling, had suffered the vicissitudes of a revolution. If, in the reign of Charles the First, they perceived a change in the language from that of Elizabeth, that change was more apparent, when, in retrograding, it was reduced to the indigent nakedness of the Puritanic period; and then, bursting into an opposite direction, like —

"Stars shot madly from their spheres," —

was mottled by the modern Gallic in phrase and in criticism, corrupting our national taste, and thus removing us still further from the Shakespearian diction in idiom and in imagery. A great master of language, Dryden, confesses he found Shakespeare almost as difficult as old Chaucer.

On the restored theatre, "the renowned Jonson," thus distinguished by Shadwell, retained his supremacy in "the Fox," "the Silent Woman," and "the Alchemist;" and the airy and loose Fletcher was popular, being considered by this new generation as having drawn the characters of gentlemen more to their humor than his grave predecessors. One of the first

displays his hypocrisy, Milton adds, "*Other stuff of this sort* may be read throughout the whole tragedy, wherein the poet used not much license in departing from the truth of history." Pye, in his "Commentary on the Poetic of Aristotle," is indignant at the language of Milton. He takes the term "stuff" in its modern depreciating sense: but it had no such meaning with Milton; it merely signified *matter*. Pye exclaims, "Could Milton have imagined that *the stuff* of Mr. William Shakespeare would be preferred to 'Comus' and the 'Samson Agonistes'?" — 212.

managers was Davenant: to his partiality, for he was eager to acknowledge Shakespeare his father both in blood and in verse, we may ascribe the revival of that poet's plays. Dryden has told that it was Davenant who first taught him to appreciate our national bard; they were caught by the fancy of the poet: but the great ethical preceptor of mankind had never entered into their contemplation; and thus "Macbeth" shrank into an opera under the hand of Davenant; and the "Tempest," after having been seemingly burlesqued by duplicate characters of Miranda, Ferdinand, and Caliban, by Davenant and Dryden together, was turned into an opera by Shadwell, and exhibited as if it were a pantomime, depending now on popular favor for new dresses, new music, and new machinery. "Romeo and Juliet" was altered by the Hon. James Howard, Dryden's brother-in-law, to introduce a happy conclusion: however, it is but justice to the town to record, that they were so firmly divided in opinion on the catastrophe, that it was alternately played as tragedy and tragic-comic. We may fairly conclude by these profanations, that the true taste for our national bard had passed away.*

Evelyn is a literary man, whose judgment has its value; and assuredly he records the taste of the court-circle. In 1661, he saw "'Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,' played; but now *the old plays begin to disgust this refined age*, since his majesty has been so long abroad." Pepys, his contemporary, was a

* I derive my knowledge from the "Roscius Anglicanus" of Downes, the prompter; it is a meagre chronicle, and the scribe is illiterate: but the edition by F. Waldron, 1784, is an addition to our literary history. Though chiefly dramatic, it abounds with some curious secret history. Waldron, himself an humble actor, was, however, a sagacious literary antiquary; but his modesty, and failure of encouragement, impeded his proposed labors. Gifford found him intelligent when that critic was busied on Jonson; and I possess an evidence of his acute emendations.

By this chronicle of our drama, it appears, that, in a list of fifteen stock plays, there are seven of Beaumont and Fletcher, three of Jonson, and three of Shakespeare. In another list of twenty-one plays, there are *five* of Jonson, and but *one* of Shakespeare, and that "Titus Andronicus."

play-haunter; and how he relished "the Midsummer Night's Dream," with all its beautiful fancy, appears by his firm opinion, that "it was the most insipid, ridiculous play he had ever seen." "Macbeth," though "a deep tragedy, had a strange perfection in a *divertissement;*" that is, "Macbeth" was Davenant's opera, with music and dancing. But Pepys *read* "Othello," and we have his deliberate notion; "but, having lately read the 'Adventures of Five Hours,' 'Othello' seemed a mean thing"! It is clear from these, and there are other as remarkable instances, that their ideas of the drama had wholly changed; that Nature and Fancy had retired from the stage, to give precedence to what are called "Heroic Tragedy," and comedies of intrigue.

Shakespeare's plays, in a great measure, were banished the stage: but we may presume that Shakespeare still preserved some readers, though not critical ones; for, four years after the Restoration, the third edition of Shakespeare in 1664, with seven additional dramas, — one of which, "the Yorkshire Tragedy," had been printed with his name in his lifetime, — was given to the world.

Leaving the theatre, and its moody humors of the populace, let us turn to those who think in their closet. How did such critics arbitrate? We can have no judge more able than the learned author of "Hudibras:" — "The quickest apprehensions, and aptest geniuses to any thing they undertake, do not always prove *the greatest masters* in it; for there is more patience and phlegm required in those that attain to any degree of perfection, than is commonly found in the temper of *active and ready wits that soon tire, and will not hold out.*" Butler instances Virgil, who, wanting much of that natural easiness of wit that Ovid had, "did nevertheless, with hard labor and long study, arrive at a higher perfection than the other, with all his dexterity of wit, but less industry, could attain to. The same we may observe of JONSON and SHAKESPEARE: for he that *is able to think long, and judge well, will be*

sure to find out better things than another man can hit upon suddenly, though of more quick and ready parts; which is commonly but CHANCE; and the other, wit and judgment."*

After this long extract, it is quite evident, that with a predilection for Shakespeare, alive at times to his true touches of nature, BUTLER could not at that day take a comprehensive view of the faculties of the great bard. What we deem his intuitive faculty seemed but "chance," that could only "hit suddenly:" that prodigality of genius, the marvels which modern criticism has revealed to its initiated, was an advent; the day had not yet come! Butler perceived the electrical strokes of Shakespeare; but the mental shadowings, and the oneness, which rose together in the creation of a "Macbeth," a "Hamlet," a "Lear," was a philosophical result, which probably no one had yet dreamed of.

If the genius of SHAKESPEARE were neglected, it was also destined to be arraigned and condemned.

Critical learning was yet new in our literature: it had taken its birth in Italy, among a crowd of philosophers, rhetoricians, and philologists, busied in developing the true principles of every species of literary composition. The academy *Della Crusca* was a tribunal, and the "Poetic of Aristotle," commented on by the renowned Castelvetro, was a code, which was chiefly directed to the dramatic art. Our airy neighbors, whose national theatre at its beginning had much resembled our own in its freedom and originality, at the erection of the famous French Academy, evidently in imitation of the Cruscan, with the great cardinal at its head, surrendered to the Greeks and to Aristotle. Every thing now was to be as it had been; and every work, whatever might be its genius, was to be strictly modelled by certain arbitrary decisions; and all tragedies were to be written according to the humor of that ancient people, the Greeks, with their choruses, and regulated by

* Butler's "Genuine Remains," ii. 494.

the severe unities of time and place and action! Bossu set down his prescriptions to compound an epic; and Père Rapin, in his "Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poetry," dictated "Universal Rules" for all sorts of poetry. RYMER, the collector of our Fœdera, in his earlier days was an excellent scholar, and cultivated elegant literature. He translated this very work of Père Rapin, to which he prefixed an ingenious critical preface on comparative poetry. Enraptured by Grecian tragedy, and vivacious with French criticism, and moreover sanguine with an elevated conception of a certain forthcoming tragedy, which was to appear "a faultless piece" among our own monstrous dramas, Rymer grasped the new and formidable weapon of modern criticism. Armed at all points with a Grecian helmet and a Gallic lance, this literary Quixote sallied forth to attack all the giants or the windmills of the English theatre.

Now appeared "the Tragedies of the Last Age examined by the Practice of the Ancients. 1678." This explosion entirely fell on three of Fletcher's plays.* This critical bomb was learned and lively. The court, and consequently the popular, tastes were classical or Gallic: RYMER haunted St. James's, and soon became one of "their majesties' servants." He had formed the most elevated conception of the dramatic art, and that tragedy was a poem for kings; and he tells, that the poets who first brought tragedy to perfection were made viceroys.

"The poetry of the last age," the age of Elizabeth, he considered was "rude as our architecture;" and he detected the cause in our utter "neglect of the Poetic of Aristotle, on which all the great men in Italy had commented, before, on this side of the Alps, we knew of the existence of such a book."

This critic-poet — for, unluckily for Aristotle, Rymer resolved on being both — had a notion, that "though it be not

* "Rollo," "King and No King," and "the Maid's Tragedy."

necessary that all heroes should be kings, yet undoubtedly all crowned heads should be heroes:" this was a prerogative of the crown never to be invaded by any parliament of poets. This passive obedience in the critical art was perfume in "the royalty" of a dedication to Charles the Second, preparatory of the writer's own legitimate tragedy of "Edgar, or the English Monarch," in rhymed verse; and the first inroad of his critical demolition was to expose "the barbarisms" of Milton's blank! Rymer was as intrepid as he was enterprising. He composed his tragedy on the principles which he advocated; and the result was precisely what happened to the Abbé d'Aubignac, who wrote on the same system. Undoubtedly, he congratulated himself on the perfection of the clock-work machinery of his legitimate drama, where he had inviolably preserved the unities; for the action begins about one o'clock at noon, and the catastrophe closes at ten at night! He would have been right by "Shrewsbury clock." To the audience, however, the "long hour" might have seemed much longer than the delightful "Winter's Tale" of Shakespeare, which includes the events of twenty years!

The formidable critique, not the tragedy, made a great sensation: many were on the side of the stout Aristotelian, though some might deem that little mercy had tempered his justice. Dryden prepared an answer, for we have its heads: but he seems to have been awed by the critic's learning, for he never proceeded; and, at a later day, Rymer was a critic, quite after Pope's own heart, on our ancient drama.* Some years after, the critique was honored by a second edition; and, in the following year, this *combat à l'outrance* was again waged, with no diminished intrepidity, in "A Short View of Tragedy,

* We may listen to Pope. — S. "Rymer is a learned and strict critic"! — P. "Ay, that's exactly his character. He is generally right, though rather too severe in his opinion of the particular plays he speaks of; and is, on the whole, one of the best critics we ever had." — SPENCE's *Anecdotes*, 172.

with some reflections on SHAKESPEARE, and other PRACTITIONERS for the Stage," 1693. This, notwithstanding the offensive theme, is replete with curious literature, and some original researches in Provençal poetry.

"Rymer is the worst critic that ever lived." Such is the warm decision of an eloquent modern critic.* But in taste, as well as in more serious affairs, every age is governed by opinions. A mechanical critic then seemed mathematically irrefutable. Judging an English drama by the practice of the ancients, his triumph was easy. This scholastic doctrine, however, proved too subtle for the English people; and even the learned themselves in time looked up to nature. The philosophy of criticism, that is, of the human mind, was then imperfectly comprehended. A critic will be no longer safe who has nothing by heart but canons of criticism. The curious "Tracts" of RYMER are a memorable evidence how a learned critic, deprived of native susceptibility, may distort the noblest productions by coarse jocularity, and that malice of criticism,—ridicule! He calls "Othello" "the tragedy of the pocket-handkerchief." That beautiful incident Shakespeare had found in Cynthio's novel, and probably intuitively felt how casualties, small as this one, in human affairs, may become associated with our highest passions. Rymer only exposed the poverty of his imagination, when, with a morsel of Quintilian, he would demonstrate this incident to be "too small a matter to move us in tragedy; much like Fortunatus's purse and the invisible cloak, long ago worn threadbare, and stowed up in the wardrobe of obsolete romance." With Othello's tragic tale before him, the critic worms himself into "the burlesque or comic parts;" and these he insidiously lauds, to insinuate that "Othello" is but "a bloody farce." The blending of the comic and the serious in the same character, as in that of Iago, as often we find it in the many-colored scenes of

* "Edinburgh Review," Sept. 1831.

human life, was an artful mixture too potent and poisonous in the cup of mechanical criticism. There is a strange malignant drollery, a bitter pleasantry, in the villanous Iago, as in the scene where he alarms Brabantio for the fate of his daughter, which to "the heroic" dramatist, who could only move on stilts, was mistaken for "farce," and not comprehended in his narrow views of human nature.

RYMER, however, was a ripe scholar, and the founder, in our literature, of what has been considered as the French or the classical school of criticism; and he has won the unlucky distinction of being designated as "Shakespeare's critic"! In Dryden's prologue to "Love Triumphant," there is an allusion which Sir Walter Scott could not assign to any individual, though he acutely suspected it had a reference to some person: Sir Walter, at that moment, forgot Rymer and his "heroic tragedy." The lines are now very significant:—

> "To SHAKESPEARE'S CRITIC he bequeathes the curse,—
> *To find his faults*, and yet HIMSELF MAKE WORSE." *

The uncertain criticisms of Dryden on Shakespeare were often dictated by the impulse of the moment, and stand in strange opposition to each other. At one happy time, indeed, he exclaimed, "I admire Jonson; but I love Shakespeare:" but he had not dived into the spirit of the poet, else we should not have had the strong censure of a "lethargy of thought for whole scenes together;" we should not have heard of "the bombast speeches of 'Macbeth;'" nor that "the historical plays, 'the Winter's Tale' and 'Measure for Measure,' are

* The fate of Rymer's tragedy has been illustrated by the inimitable humor of Addison, in No. 592 of "the Spectator." Describing different theatrical properties, he says, "They are provided with above a dozen showers of snow, which, as I am informed, are the plays of many unsuccessful poets, artificially cut and shredded for that use. Mr. Rymer's 'Edgar' is to fall in snow at the next acting of 'King Lear,' in order to heighten, or rather to alleviate, the distress of that unfortunate prince, and to serve by way of decoration to a piece which that great critic has written against."

so meanly written, that the comedy neither caused your mirth, nor the serious part your concernment."

Dryden, however great as a poet, was deficient in passion, whose natural touches he acknowledged he had found in Otway. In his earliest pieces, while enamoured of the false taste of his heroic tragedies, it is certain he had formed little relish for nature and Shakespeare, which, at a later period of life, he seems to have been more open to.

In 1681, the poet laureate, Nahum Tate, was so little acquainted with Shakespeare, that, "Lear" being brought to his notice, he found it a treasure, a heap of jewels unstrung and unpolished; and, having had "the good fortune to light upon an expedient to rectify it," he brought it on the stage.

Shakespeare was now out of fashion, and a man of fashion aimed a last and mortal blow. The noble author of the "Characteristics" anathematized "the Gothic model of poetry." He told the nation that "the British Muses were in their infant state, without any thing of shapeliness or person, lisping in their cradles, with stammering tongues, which nothing but their youth and rawness can excuse." Our dramatic SHAKESPEARE and our epic MILTON are among these venerable bards, "*rude as they were according to their time and age.*" The classical pedant had, however, the sagacity to perceive that they have provided us with "the richest ore." Nature and Shakespeare lifted not their veil to the cold artificial soliloquist, whose faint delicacy bred its own sickliness, and who, in the march and glitter of his external pomp, only betrayed the internal failure of his vigor.

The fourth and last folio edition of Shakespeare appeared in 1685. The poet again was locked up in a huge folio for the following twenty-five years; when, in 1709, he was freed by Rowe, who now gave him to the world at large in a more current form, which would meet the eye of the many.*

* On the play-bills of that day I find the modern dramas of "Cato," "the Conscious Lovers," and Cibber's and Farquhar's plays are simply an-

The appearance of Rowe's edition at least placed the volumes in the hands of Steele and Addison, and possibly it formed their first studies of this poet. Whoever will take the pains to examine their popular papers may discover the fruits of their first thoughts. Steele at first seems to have derived his knowledge of Shakespeare from the plays as they were represented: he quotes "Macbeth" by memory very faultily, in the famous exclamation of Macduff; and seems quite unconscious of the character of Lady Macbeth, and indeed notices that all the female characters of Shakespeare make "so small a figure."* As we proceed, we discover him more deeply read and more familiar with the poet's language. It was not to be hoped, from Addison's colder fancy and classical severity, that the Elizabethan poet could transport this critic by his inexhaustible imagery, and a diction which paints the passions as well as reveals them. The prosaic genius of Addison, which had produced a frigid "Cato," could hardly fathom the depth of the mightier soul. He pronounced Shakespeare "very faulty in hard metaphors and forced expressions," and

nounced; while the elder dramatists have accompanying epithets, which show the degree of their celebrity, according at least to the director of the bills, and perhaps indicate the necessity he was under to remind the public, who were not familiar with the titles of these old plays. Thus appear "'the Silent Woman,' a comedy by the *famous* Ben Jonson;" "'Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,' written by the *immortal* Shakespeare;" "'the Soldier's Fortune,' written by the late *ingenious* Mr. Otway." Though Shakespeare bears away the prize among these epithetical allotments, I suspect that his *immortality* — here positively assigned to him — was owing to the honor of the recent edition by Rowe.

In 1741, the theatre seems to have recommended the dramas of Shakespeare for the variety of their *historical subjects*. On one of these bills, "Richard the Third" is described as "containing the distresses of King Henry the Sixth; the murder of young King Edward the Fifth and his brother in the Tower; the landing of the Earl of Richmond; and the death of King Richard in the memorable battle of Bosworth, being the last that was fought between the Houses of York and Lancaster; with many other true historical passages."

* "Tatler," 42.

he joins Shakespeare and Nat Lee as instances of the false sublime.* Pope's idea was similar, in his conversation, not in his preface; and later so was Thomas Warton's.†

In 1718, Bysshe, in compiling his "Art of Poetry," which consists of mere extracts, passed by "Spenser and the poets of his age, because their language has become so obsolete that most readers of our age have no ear for them, and therefore SHAKESPEARE is so rarely cited in this collection."

Rowe silently corrected his unostentatious edition: when fifteen years had elapsed, Tonson called on a greater poet to succeed to the editorial throne. The classical taste of Pope was disturbed and rarely sympathized with "the choice of the subjects, the wrong conduct of the incidents, false thoughts, forced expressions:" in tenderness to Shakespeare, these he held to be "not so much defects, but superfetations," which are to be ascribed to the times, to interpolation, to the copyists; and, contemning "the dull duty" of editorship, he initiated himself into the novel office of expurgator; striking out or inserting at pleasure, — not only pruning, but grafting. Schlegel exclaims in agony, that Pope would have given us a mutilated Shakespeare! but Pope, to satisfy us that he was not insensible to the fine passages of Shakespeare, distinguished by inverted commas all those which he approved! — so that Pope thus furnished for the first time what have been called "the *beauties* of Shakespeare"! But, amid such a disfigured text, the *faults* of Shakespeare must have been too apparent! Pope but partially relished, and often ill understood, his Shakespeare; yet, in the liveliest of prefaces, he offers the most vivid delineation of our great bard's *general characteristics*. The *genius of Shakespeare* was at once comprehended by his brother poet; but *the text* he was continually tampering with ended in a fatal testimony, that POPE had no congenial taste for the style, the manner, and the whole

* "Spectator," 39, 285. † V. iv. 186.

native drama, of England.* Pope laid himself open to the investigating eye of Theobald.

The attention of Theobald had been drawn to our old plays, by Thomas Coxeter, an enthusiast of our ancient dramatists. This Coxeter was the original projector of their revival; but, having communicated his plan, he witnessed the incompetent Dodsley appropriate this fond hope of his dreamy life, and he has left us his indignant groans.†

After an interval of seven years, Theobald gave his edition. His attempts were limited to the emendation of corrupt passages, and the explanation of obscure ones: the more elevated disquisitions to develop the genius of his author, by principles of criticism applied to his beauties or his defects, he assigned to "a masterly pen." This, at least, was not arrogant. The man who is sensible of his own weakness is safe by not tasking it to the proof. His annotations are amus-

* Pope said that "it was mighty simple in Rowe to write a play now, professedly in Shakespeare's style; that is, the style of a bad age"! He relished as little Milton's "high style," as he called it. "The high style would not have been borne even in Milton, had not his subject turned so much on such strange out-of-the-world things as it does." Lord Shaftesbury would furnish a code of criticism in the days of Pope, when the "Gothic model" was proscribed by such high authorities. But Pope expressed unqualified approbation for the stately but classical "Ferrex and Porrex," and occasioned Spence to reprint it, — a tragedy in the unimpassioned style and short breathings of the asthmatic Seneca.

† Coxeter, after a search of thirty years, faithfully collating the best of our old plays, tells us he happened to communicate his scheme to one who now invades it; but, for what mistakes and confusion may be expected from the medley now advertising in ten volumes, he appeals to the "Gorboduc" which Spence had published by the desire of Pope: both these wits, and the future editor of "Old Plays," Dodsley, had used the spurious edition! Coxeter's judgment was prophetic in the present instance. "Dodsley's Collection" turned out to be a chance "medley:" unskilled in the language and the literature and the choice of his dramatists, he, as he tells us, "by the assistance of a little common sense, set a great number of these passages right;" that is, the dramatist of the dull "Cleone" brought down the ancient genius to his own; and, if he became intelligible, at least he was spurious. If, after all, some parts were left unintelligible, the reader must consider how many such remain in Shakespeare.

ing from the self-complacency of the writer, who at times seems to have been struck by his own felicitous results; and in truth he was often successful, more than has been honestly avowed by those who have poached on his manor. Theobald exulted over Pope; but he read his triumph in "the Dunciad."

The Popeians now sunk the sole merit of the laborious sagacity of "the restorer," as Mr. Pope affectionately called him, to that of "a word-catcher." But "piddling Theobald," branded in the forehead by the immortal "Dunciad," was the first who popularized the neglected writings of Shakespeare.* His editions dispersed thirteen thousand copies; while nearly a third of Pope's original subscription edition, of seven hundred and fifty copies, were left unvendible.†

It is an evidence of the spread of Shakespeare's celebrity, that a fashionable circle had formed themselves into a society under the title of "the Shakespeare Club." Every week they bespoke some favorite play; but, unexpectedly, the *acted plays* of Shakespeare seemed to lose greatly of their secret magic: this failure was charged upon the unhappy performers, whose skill appeared all unequal to raise the emotions which the bard had inspired in the closet. Certain it is, that, for the full comprehension of the genius of this great poet, we must learn

* A third edition lies before me, 1757. The preface of the first edition of 1733 was much curtailed in the second of 1740, as well as the notes, particularly those which Theobald describes as "rather verbose and declamatory, and so notes merely of ostentation." The candor is admirable. The third edition seems a mere reprint of the second. The first edition is also curious for its plates, preserving the *costume*, or dress, of the characters at the time.

† This was one of those literary secrets which are only divulged on that final day of judgment which happens to authors, when, on the decease of their publishers, those literary cemeteries, their warerooms, open for the sale of what are called "their effects;" but which, in this instance of literary property, may be deemed "the ineffectual effects." At the sale of "the effects" of Tonson, the great bibliopolist, in 1767, one hundred and forty copies of Pope's "Shakespeare," in six volumes quarto, for which the original subscribers paid six guineas, were disposed of at sixteen shillings only per set.—*Gent. Mag.*, lvii. 76.

to think, to reflect, to combine; for what has passed is a part of what is going on; and this is a labor more adapted for the repose of the closet than the business of the theatre. Much is written which must remain in the mind, and cannot come within the province of acting. The dramas of Shakespeare, as they have descended to us, modern taste also has always required to be altered and adapted: they are less calculated for performance on the stage than those of almost any other dramatist who has become classical in the theatre. Unquestionably, the great poet had retained much of the barbarism of the old plays which he rewrote without remodelling; bustle which hurries on our attention without stimulating our feelings; some flagrant indecorums and some absolute nonsense to the taste of "the groundlings of the Globe." In the revery of the poet's pages, the eye glides silently over the offending passages which cannot detain it. It was these prominent defects which provoked so many modern alterations; and no doubt Tate and Cibber, and all that race, exulted like Shadwell, who, in his dedication to his alteration of "Timon of Athens," exclaims, "I can truly say, I have made it into a play." When Sir James Mackintosh observed, that "Massinger's taste, as Shakespeare's genius, is displayed with such prodigal magnificence in the *parts*, but never employed in the construction of the whole," he was perhaps not aware of the real cause; which was that of our great poet following the construction of old plays, without altering their ordonnance. It is true, also, that the characters of Shakespeare require something of his own genius in their personifiers to sustain the perfect illusion: great actors seem always to have felt the deep emotions they raised; they studied, they meditated, till at length they personified the ideal character they represented. We are told this of Burbage and Betterton, and we know it of Garrick and Mrs. Siddons.

A novel fate was now to befall Shakespeare. Theobald had made his volumes useful for all hands: a man of rank, who

had been the speaker of the House of Commons, set the first example of literary magnificence. Sir THOMAS HANMER had cradled his fancy in the idealism of publication: his edition was to be not only "the fairest impression, beautified with the ornaments of sculpture," but it was not to be *sold* by booksellers! The Shakespeare of Sir Thomas Hanmer seemed to be a sacred thing, like the show-bread of ancient Israel, to be touched by no profane hand, nor eaten but by an exclusive class. He made a gratuitous donation of his "sculptured" edition to his Alma Mater, to issue from the university-press, at a very moderate subscription-price. The embroidered mantle, however, but ill concealed the trifler. Sir Thomas had vigorously attacked the grammatical errors of the poet, which, in fact, was often a violation of the text; for Shakespeare wrote ungrammatically: the other editorial effort was a metrical amusement, gently lopping a redundant or straightening a limping line. The only harm of his edition was his modesty in adopting all the innovations of his predecessors; for his own were quite innocent. On the whole, Sir Thomas appears to have edited his Shakespeare, wearing all the while his "white kid gloves," which the Mad Tom Hervey, who ran away with his lady, by information which he ought not to have divulged, assured the world that the baronet always slept in.

Under the veil of giving "dear Mr. Pope's" edition, which no one craved, the great author of "the Divine Legation" now edited Shakespeare. It must have occurred to the readers of this edition, that hitherto no one had entered into any right conception of a great portion of the poet's writings. Many passages with which our memory is familiar were wrested into the most whimsical readings; plain matters were for ever obscured by perverse but ingenious interpretations; not only the words but the thoughts of the author were changed; here a line was to be wholly rejected, and there an interpolation was to clear an imperfect sense: but the most

prominent feature of the commentary was that learned fancy which struck out allusions to the most recondite circumstances of learned antiquity.*

In this great commentator on Shakespeare, there was always a contest between his learning and his fancy; the one was copious, and the other was exuberant: neither could yield to the other; and the reader was sure to be led astray by both. His fervid curiosity was absolutely creative; all things crowded to bear on his point: in the precipitancy of his pen, his taste or his judgment was not of that degree which could save him even from inglorious absurdities. But the ingenious follies of his literature were such that they have often been preserved, for the sake of all that learning which it required for their refutation.

When all was over, and the battle was fought and lost, the friends of the great man acknowledged that the editor's design had never been to explain Shakespeare! and that he was even conscious that he had frequently imputed to the poet meanings which had never entered the mind of the bard! Our critic's grand object was to display his own learning in these amusements of his leisure. Warburton wrote for Warburton, and not for Shakespeare; and the literary confession almost rivals those of Lauder or Psalmanazar.

There is one more remarkable object in the Shakespeare of Warburton. He not only preserved that strange device of Pope, to distinguish the most beautiful passages by *inverted commas*, but carried on that ridiculous process on his own separate account by marking his favorites by *double commas*. It is evident that these great editors judged Shakespeare by these fragmentary and unconnected passages, which could not indicate the harmonious and gradual rise of the thoughts, nor the fine transitions of emotions, and less the comprehensive genius, of the inventor. They were scattering the living

* See "Quarrels of Authors."

members which must be viewed whole with all their movements, and at last must be sought for by the reader in his own mind. The truest mode of discovering the beauties of an author is first to be conversant with the beautiful; otherwise it is possible that the beauties may escape the readers, even should they be marked by a Pope or a Warburton.

The acknowledged failure of the preceding editions invited to a fresh enterprise; and it was the edition of Johnson, in 1765, which conferred on Shakespeare the stability of a classic, by the vigor and discrimination of his criticism, and the solemnity of his judicial decisions.

When Johnson had issued his proposals twenty years before for an edition of Shakespeare, he pointed to a great novelty for the elucidation of the poet. His intuitive sagacity had discerned that a poet so racy and native required a familiarity both with the idiom and the manners of his age. He was sensible that a complete explanation of an author, not systematic and consequential, but desultory and vagrant, abounding in casual allusions and slight hints, is not to be expected from any single scholiast. He enumerates, however, the desiderata for this purpose; among which we find that of reading the books which Shakespeare read, and to compare his works with those of writers who lived at the same time, or immediately preceded, or immediately followed him. This project, happily conceived, inferred comprehensive knowledge in the proposer; but it was only a revery, — a dim Pisgah view which the sagacity of the great critic had taken of that future Canaan, which he himself never entered. With this sort of knowledge, and these forgotten writers, which the future commentators of Shakespeare revelled in, Johnson remained wholly unacquainted.

But what proved more fatal to the editorial ability of JOHNSON than this imperfect knowledge of the literature and the manners of the age of Shakespeare, was that the commentator rarely sympathized with the poet; for his hard-witted and

unpliant faculties, busied with the more palpable forms of human nature, when thrown amid the supernatural and the ideal, seemed suddenly deserted of their powers: the magic knot was tied which cast our Hercules into helpless impotence; and, in the circle of imaginative creation, we discover the baffled sage resisting the spell by apologizing for Shakespeare's introduction of his mighty preternatural beings! a certain evidence that the critic had never existed for a moment under their influence. "Witches, fairies, and ghosts would not now be tolerated by an audience:" such was the grave and fallacious assumption of the unimaginative critic, which seems something worse than Voltaire's raillery: for, though that wit ridiculed the ghost in "Hamlet," he afterwards had the poetic agility to transfer its solemnity to his own "Semiramis;" though, like all rapid inlayers, the *appliqué* did not fit to his work.*

We may even suspect the degree of our great critic's susceptibility of the infinitely varied emotions flowing in the inexhaustible vein of the poet of nature. In those judicial summaries at the close of each drama, his cold approbation, his perplexing balancings, his hazarded doubts, or his positive censures, all alike betray the uncertainty and the difficulties of a critical mind, which misapplied its energies to themes adverse to its habits.

Johnson's preface to his Shakespeare was long held as a masterpiece; and several splendid passages, after more than

* Laharpe, in a paroxysm of criticism, had both to defend and to censure his great master, Voltaire, on the subject of the Marvellous in Tragedy; and, strange to observe, in the coldness of the Aristotelian-Gallic Poetic, our "monster-poet" carries away the palm. The critic acknowledges, that, though he is loath to compare "Semiramis" to that "monster of a tragedy," "Hamlet," the Ghost there acts as a ghost should do, — showing himself but to one person, and revealing a secret unknown to all but himself; while the Ghost of Ninus appears in a full assembly, only to tell the hero to listen to somebody else who knows the secret as well as the ghost. — *Cours de Littérature.*

half a century, remain to remind us of his nervous intellect. If we now read that preface with a different understanding than that of most of its contemporaries, it is because Johnson himself has revealed his poetical confessions in certain "Lives of the Poets." We now look on that famed preface much more as a labor of pomp than a labor of love. Far from me be any irreverence to our master-genius of the past century, whose volumes were read by all readers, and imitated by all writers: my first devotion to literature was caught from his pages, and the fire still burns on that altar. But the literary character of JOHNSON, with his enduring works, is no longer a subject of inquiry, but of history; of truths established, and not of opinions which are mutable.

Can we imagine that Johnson himself experienced a degree of conviction, some perplexing consciousness, that his spirit was not endowed with the sensibility of Longinus? A profound thinker, acutely argumentative and analytical, though clothed in the purple of his cumbrous diction and the cadences of his concatenated periods, when he touched on themes of pure imagination, and passions not merely declamatory, had nothing left to him but the solitary test of his judgment to decide on what lies out of the scope of daily life. He interpreted the pathetic and the sublime, till they ceased to be either by the force of his reasoning and the weakness of his conceptions; he cross-examined shadowy fancies, till they vanished under the eye of the judge. He had no wing to ascend into "the heaven of invention."

In JOHNSON'S SHAKESPEARE, therefore, we may trace that deficient sympathy which subsequently betrayed itself in his revolting decisions on Collins, on Gray, on Milton, and on others. It was his hard fate to be called on to deliver his solemn decisions on two of our greatest poets: from Spenser he had fortunately escaped, having wholly forgotten the Muse of Mulla; while his piety and his taste had remembered Blackmore, in the collection of English poets. It is curious to

detect the mode by which our great critic extricated himself from the difficulties of his judicial function on Shakespeare and on Milton, by his prudential sagacity, and his passive obedience to established authorities. Johnson's preface to Shakespeare was grafted on Pope's; as afterwards, when he came to Milton, he followed the track of Addison. But Johnson was too honest to disguise the reality of his own conviction. It was legitimate to adopt theirs; but it was independent to preserve his own: in this dissonance he has left a lesson and a warning for some who are eminent, and who travel in the high-road of criticism.

It is thus that we find in this famous preface to Shakespeare that he is hailed as the poet of nature, and is placed by the side of Homer; and of this, Pope had instructed the critic; but, in the sudden change, the noble qualities of the bard are minutely reversed: the antithesis was too often in the critic's own taste, and the characteristic excellence ascribed to Shakespeare seems hardly compatible with the number and the grossness of his faults. Every work of note bears the impression of its times; and we learn from the faithful chronicler of Johnson the real occasion which gave rise to this remarkable preface. "A blind and indiscriminate admiration of Shakespeare had exposed the British nation to the ridicule of foreigners; and this preface was considered as a grave, well-considered, and impartial opinion of the judge." Such was the defence of the logical critic, who so diligently enumerated the defects of his author, that Voltaire, who could never understand the language nor comprehend the genius of Shakespeare, might sometimes have referred to Johnson to confirm his own depreciating notions.

The extensive plan for the illustration of the poet, imperfectly projected by Johnson, was finally executed through a series of editions, which gave rise to a new class of literary antiquaries.

Shortly after the first edition of Johnson, Dr. FARMER led the way to the disclosure of a new lore in our old books.

Farmer had silently pursued an untired chase in this "black" forest, for he had a keen *gusto* for the native venison; and, alluding to his Shakespearian pursuits, exclaimed in the inspiring language of his poet, —

> "Age cannot wither them, nor custom stale
> Their infinite variety."

His vivacity relieved the drowsiness of mere antiquarianism. This novel pursuit once opened, an eager and motley pack was hallooed up; and Shakespeare, like Actæon, was torn to pieces by a whole kennel of his own hounds, as they were typified with equal humor and severity. But to be severe, and never to be just, is the penury of the most sordid criticism; and among these —

> "Spirits black, white, and gray," —

are some of the most illustrious in English literature.

The original edition of Johnson consisted only of eight volumes: had not the contriving wisdom of the printers impressed the last into twenty and one huge tomes, they might easily have been expanded into forty.

When we survey the massive *variorum* edition of Shakespeare, we are struck by the circumstance, that nothing similar has happened to any other national author. It was not to be expected, that, after the invention of the art of printing, an author could arise, whose works should be disfigured by treacherous transcribers, corrupted by interpolations, and still more by a race of men whose art was unknown to the ancients, subjecting his text to the mercy of contending commentators and conjectural critics. But a singular combination of untoward circumstances, attached to this poet and his works, produced this remarkable result. The scholiasts among the ancient classics had rejoiced in some rare emendation of the text, or the rhetorical commentator had flourished in the luxuriance of the latent beauties of some favorite author. But a far wider and deeper source of inquiry was now to be at-

tempted, historical or explanatory, — comments to clear up obscure allusions; to indicate unknown prototypes; to trace the vicissitudes of words as well as things; to picture forth the customs and the manners which had faded into desuetude, and to re-open for us the records of our social and domestic life; thus at once to throw us back into that age, and to familiarize us with that language, of Shakespeare which had vanished. Shakespeare, it may be said, suddenly became the favorite object of literary inquiry. Every literary man in the nation conned over and illumined "the infinite variety" of the bard; and assuredly they enriched our vernacular literature with a collection of historical, philological, and miscellaneous information unparalleled among any other literary people. In 1785, ISAAC REED, in one of his prefaces, informs us that "the works of Shakespeare, during the last twenty years, have been the object of public attention."

All this novel knowledge was, however, not purchased at a slight cost. It was not only to be snatched up by accidental discovery, but it was more severely tasked by what Steevens called "a course of black-letter"! — dusty volumes, and fugitive tracts, and the wide range of antiquarian research. The sources whence they drew their waters were muddy; and STEEVENS, who affected more gayety in his chains than his brothers in the Shakespearian galley, with bitter derision reproached his great coadjutor MALONE, whom he looked on with the evil eye of rivalry for drawing his knowledge from "books too mean to be formally quoted."

The commentators have encumbered the poet, who often has been but a secondary object of their lucubrations; for they not only write notes on Shakespeare, but notes, and bitter ones too, on one another. This commentary has been turned into a gymnasium for the public sports of friendly and of unfriendly wrestlers; where some have been so earnest, that it is evident, that, in measuring a cast, they congratulated themselves in

the language of Orlando: "If ever he goes alone again, I'll never wrestle for prize more."

THOMAS WARTON once covered with his shield some of the minor brotherhood: "If Shakespeare is worth reading, he is worth explaining; and the researches used for so valuable and elegant a purpose merit the thanks of genius and candor, not the satire of prejudice and ignorance." But this serves not as an apology for abusing the privilege of a commentator; elucidating the poet into obscurity by information equally contradictory and curious; racking us by fantastic readings which no one imagined before or since; and laying us open to the mercy of some who never ventured to sharpen their pens but on our irresistible Shakespeare. What has been the result of the petty conflicts between the arch maliciousness of Steevens and the fervent plodding of Malone, which raised up two parties among the Shakesperian commentators, till they became so personal, that a Steevenite and a Malonist looked on each other suspiciously, and sometimes would drop the ordinary civilities of life? At length, strange to tell, after Steevens had labored with zeal equal to the whole confraternity, it became a question with him, in what manner the poet COULD be read? Are we to con over each note appended to each word or passage? — but this would be perpetually to turn aside the flow of our imagination; or are we to read a large portion of the text uninterruptedly, and then return to the notes? — but this would be breaking the unity of the poet into fragments; or for a final decision, and the avowal must have mortified the ingenuous illustrator, according to a third class of readers, were these illustrations to be altogether rejected? Must the poet or the commentator be at continual variance? or shall we endure to see "Alcides beaten by his page"?

Might I be allowed to offer an award on a matter so involved and delicate as this union between the genius of Shakespeare and the genius of his commentators, I would concede

the divorce, from the incompatibility of temper between the parties; but I would insist on a separate maintenance, to preserve the great respectability attached to the party most complained of. The true reader of Shakespeare may then accommodate himself with two editions,—the one for his hand, having nothing but what the poet has written; the other for the shelf, having all the commentators have conjectured, confuted, and confounded.*

The celebrity of Shakespeare is no longer bounded by his nationality. Even France responds, though the voice of Parisian critics is muffled, confused, and ambiguous: they have not yet solved the great problem, why Shakespeare is an omnipotent dramatist.† The school of Corneille and Racine are

* Much, if not all, that is valuable in this great body of varied information, has been alphabetically arranged in "A Glossary, or Collection of Words, Phrases, Names, and Allusions to Customs, Proverbs, &c., which have required illustration in the *works of English Authors*, particularly *Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*," by Archdeacon Nares, 4to, 1822; a compilation as amusing as it is useful, and which I suspect has not been justly appreciated. It is a substitute for all these commentators; and with this volume, at an easy rate, we are made free of the whole Shakesperian corporation.

† Monsieur VILLEMAIN, who possesses a perfect knowledge of our English writers on historical subjects, and many years since composed a Life of Cromwell, has drawn up an elaborate article on SHAKESPEARE in the "Biographie Universelle." The perplexities of his taste, and the contradictory results of his critical decisions, are amusing; but it must have been a serious labor for a person of his strict candor. Our critic remains astonished at Johnson's preference of Shakespeare's comic to his tragic genius; which never can be, he adds, the opinion of foreigners. Monsieur Villemain is perfectly right; for no foreigner can comprehend the humor, not always delicate, but strong, which often depends on the phrase, as well as on the character: but he errs when he can only discover in the comedy of Shakespeare merely a drama of intrigue, and not a picture of manners. Our critic has formed no conception of the poet's ideal standard and universal nature; insomuch that, to this day, we continue to apply among ourselves those exquisite personal strokes of the comic characters of Shakespeare. Our critic, who cannot perceive that which perhaps only a native can really taste, is indignant at the enthusiastic critic who has decided that MOLIERE only gave "a prosaic copy of human nature, and is merely a faithful or a servile imitator." I suppose this critic is Schlegel, a prejudiced critic on

perplexed, like Quin, who could not be brought to acknowledge the creative acting of Garrick; observing, that, "if that young man were right, all which they had hitherto done was wrong."

Voltaire, in early life, to compose the "Henriade," to escape from the Bastile, or to conceal his espionage, — for he appears to have been a secret *employé* of the French ministry, — resided a considerable time in England. He acquired an unusual knowledge of our language, and published an essay on the epic poets in English.* He discovered a new world among our writers, and was the first who introduced the literature of England into France. Voltaire expounded to his nation the philosophy of Newton; but unhappily he criticised and translated Shakespeare, whose idiomatic phrases and metaphorical style did not admit of the demonstrations of the Newtonian system. To the author of the "Henriade," who had ever before his eyes the two great masters whom he was one day to rival, the anti-classical and "Gothic" genius of a poet of the Elizabethan period, scorning the unities, following events without the contrivance of an intrigue artfully developed, mingling farce with tragedy, buffoons with monarchs, and preternatural beings stalking amid the palpable

system. I beg leave to add, that it is not necessary to decry the French Shakespeare to elevate our own. Molière is as truly an original genius as any dramatist of any age.

* This rare tract, which I once read in a private library which had been collected in the days of Pope, was apparently Voltaire's entire composition: for the Gallicisms bear the impression of a foreigner's pen, and of one determined to prove the authenticity of its source. "Voltaire, like the French in general," said Dr. Young, "showed the greatest complaisance outwardly, and had the greatest contempt for us inwardly." He consulted Dr. Young about his Essay in English, and begged him to correct any gross faults. The doctor set himself very honestly to work; marked the passages most liable to censure; and, when he went to explain himself about them, Voltaire could not avoid bursting out and laughing in his face! — *Spence.*

Had Voltaire accepted the doctor's verbal corrections, or the opinions suggested by him, something else than the "laughing in the face" had been recollected.

realities of life, — such irregular dramas seemed to the Aristotelian but *des farces monstrueuses*, as we see they appeared to Rymer and Shaftesbury; but Voltaire was too sagacious to be wholly insensible that "these monstrous farces, which they call tragedies, had scenes grand and terrific." Voltaire, then meditating on his future dramas, in passing over the surface of the soil, discovered that a mine lay beneath, —

"Some ore
Among a mineral of metals base;"

and the embedded treasure was worked with more diligence than with gratitude to the owner. If Voltaire ridiculed what he had found, it was partly with the desire of its concealment, but not wholly; for it was impossible for any foreigner to interpret sweet words and idiomatic phrases not to be found in dictionaries, or to make way through the bewilderment of the perpetual metaphorical diction of the daring fancy of the great poet: but the deformities of the bard would be too intelligible, — all those parts which Pope would have struck out as "superfetations." A bald version, or a malicious turn, would amuse the world by those amazing absurdities, which the wit, too famous for his ridicule, rejoiced to commit; and Europe yet knew nothing of Shakespeare, and lay under the sway of this autocrat of literature.*

* Two specimens of the criticism of Voltaire may explain his involuntary and his voluntary blunders: —

In "Hamlet," when one sentinel inquires of the other, "Have you had quiet guard?" he is answered, "Not a mouse stirring!" which Voltaire translates literally, "Pas un souris qui trotte"! How different is the same circumstance described by Racine! — "Tout dort, et l'armée, et les vents, et Neptune"! — a verse Kaimes had condemned as mere bombast! To every people, who had not associated with the general night-stillness of a castle the movement of a mouse, this description would appear ludicrously puerile; while with us the familiar idiom is most happily appropriate to the speaker: but this natural language no foreigner can acquire by study or reflection we imbibe our idioms as we did the milk of the nurse's breast.

In "Julius Cæsar," when Voltaire translates Cæsar's reply to Metellus, who would fall at his feet to supplicate for the repeal of his brother's banish-

Mrs. MONTAGUE was the Minerva, for so she was complimented on this occasion, whose celestial spear was to transfix the audacious Gaul. Her "Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare, compared with the Greek and French dramatic poets," served for a popular answer to Voltaire. This accomplished lady, who had raised a literary coterie about her, which attracted such fashionable notice that its title has survived its institution, found in "the Blue-stocking Club" choral hymns and clouds of incense gathering about the altar in Portman Square! The volume is deemed "a wonderful performance," by those echoes of contemporary prepossessions, the compilers of dictionary-biography: even the poet Cowper placed Mrs. Montague "at the head of all that is called learned."

This lady's knowledge of the English drama, and the genius of our ancient literature, is as vague and indistinct as that of the Greek tragedians, to whom she frequently refers, without, we are told, any intimacy with the originals. She discovers many bombast speeches even in "Macbeth;" but she triumphantly exclaims, "Shakespeare redeems the nonsense, the indecorum, the irregularities of his plays;" irregularities which seem to her incomprehensible. Her criticisms are the random

ment, the Cæsar of Shakespeare uses metaphorical expressions. He would not yield to —

> "That which melteth fools: I mean sweet words,
> Low-crooked curt'sies, and base *spaniel-fawning*.
> If thou dost bend and pray and fawn for him,
> *I'd spurn thee like a cur out of my way.*"

This natural style was doubtless "trop familier" for the polished Frenchman, and his version is malicious; and he delights to detail every motion of a spaniel, even to the licking of the feet of his master! —

> "*Les airs d'un chien couchant* peuvent toucher un sot;
> Flatte, prie à genoux, et *lèche-moi les pieds* —
> Va, je te *rosserai* comme un chien."

Rosser can only be translated by so mean a phrase as "a sound beating;" while to spurn is no ignoble action, and is used rather in a poetical than familiar style.

reflections of her feelings; but trusting to our feelings alone, unaccompanied by that knowledge on which they should be based, is confiding in a capricious, and often an erring dictator, governed by our own humors, or by fashionable tastes.

Thus have we viewed our bard through distinct eras, from the time in which he was not yet pre-eminently distinguished among his numerous peers: the Shakespeare of his own day could not be the Shakespeare of posterity; his rivals could only view that genius in its progress; and though there was not one who was a Shakespeare, yet, in that bursting competition of genius, there were many who were themselves Shakespearian. In a succeeding era, novel and unnational tastes prevailed: to the Drydenists, who, dismissing the language of nature, substituted a false nature in their exaggerated passion, Shakespeare might have said of himself, —

> "I dare do all that may become a man,
> Who dares do more is none;" —

and when tried by the conventional code of criticism, and condemned, the poet of creation might have exclaimed to Rymer and to Shaftesbury, —

> "The poet's eye,
> Bodying forth the forms of THINGS UNKNOWN,
> . . . . . gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name."

Emerging into light through his modern editors, the volume in the hands of all men, the English public, with whom the classical model was held as nothing, received him as their national bard; for every one read in "the chance" that could only "hit suddenly," as Butler has described the genius of Shakespeare, revelations about himself. It seemed as if the poet had served in all professions, taking every color of public and domestic life. Lawyers have detected their law-cunning in the legal contrivances of the poet; physicians have commented on the madness of Lear, and the mystery of Hamlet; statesmen have meditated on profound speculations

in civil polity; the merchant and the mechanic, the soldier and the maiden, — all, from the crowned head to the sailor-boy, — found that, in the cursory pages of the great dramatist, he had disclosed to all the tribes of mankind the secrets of their condition. The plenitude and the pliancy of the Shakespearian mind may be manifested by a trivial circumstance. We are a people of pamphleteers; a free country has a free communication; and many, for interest or vainglory, rush to catch the public ear. To point out the drift of their effusions, and aid a dubious title by an unquestioned authority, the greater number of these incessant fugitives, coming in all shapes, will be usually found to have recourse for this apposite thought, and crowning motto, to the prodigal pages of Shakespeare, who, thus pressed into their service, has often made the drift of the pamphleteer intelligible, vainly sought in his confused pamphlet.

When the strange condition of his works made the poet the noble prey of a brood of commentators, antiquarian and philological, from that generation he derived nothing of that abstract greatness with which we are now accustomed to contemplate a genius which seems universal. It was not by new readings, contested restorations, conjectural emendations, and notes explanatory of customs and phrases, however useful, that we could penetrate into the depths of a genius profound as Nature herself; and it was only when philosophical critics tested this genius by their own principles, that the singularity was discovered to Europe.

Hitherto the critical art had been verbal or didactic or dogmatic; but when the mind engaged itself in watching its own operations by analysis and combination, and when the laws of its constitution formed a science, educing principles, and exploring the sources of our emotions, all arbitrary conventions were only rated at their worth, while the final appeal was made to our own experience: these nobler critics founded the demonstrations of their metaphysical reasonings on our

consciousness. This novel philosophy was more surely and more deeply laid in the nature of man, and whatever concerns man, than the arbitrary code of the Stagyrite, who had founded many of his laws on what had only been customs. We were passing from the history of the human understanding to the history of the imagination; and the whole beautiful process of the intellectual faculties was a new revelation. Theories of taste and systems of philosophy multiplied our sympathies, and amplified our associations: the intellectual powers had their history, and the passions were laid bare in their eloquent anatomy. But, in these severe investigations, this new school had to seek for illustrations and for examples which might familiarize their abstract principles; and these philosophical critics appealed to Nature, and drew them from her poetic interpreter.

It was the philosophical critics, who, by trying Shakespeare by these highest tests, fixed him on his solitary eminence. From Lord Kaimes, through a brilliant succession of many a Longinus, the public has been instructed. The strokes of nature and the bursts of passion, the exuberance of his humor and the pathos of his higher mood, untutored minds had felt more or less, and Shakespeare was lauded for what they considered to be his "natural parts;" and it was parts only on which they could decide, for the true magnitude they could not yet comprehend. The loneliness of his genius, in its profundity or its elevation, and the delicacy of its delineations, the mighty space his universal faculty extends before us, — these they could never reach! The phenomenon had not been explained; the instruments had not yet been invented which could fathom its depths, or take the admeasurement at the meridian.

But, if philosophical criticism has been so far favorable to develop the truth of nature in the great poet, it is not a consequence that Shakespeare himself produced his poetry on those revolving systems of metaphysics by which some late

æsthetic and rhetorical German critics have somewhat offuscated the solitary luminary. They have developed such a system of intricate thinking in the genius of the poet, such a refined connection between his conceptions and the execution of his dramatic personages, they have so grafted their own imagination upon his, that at times it becomes doubtful whether we are influenced by the imagination of the critic, or that of the poet. In this seraphic mode of criticism, the poem becomes mythic, and the poet a myth: in the power of abstraction, these critics have passed beyond the regions of humanity. We soar with them into the immensity of space, and we tremble as if we stood alone in the universe; we have lost sight of Nature, as we seem to have passed her human boundaries. The ancient divinity of poetry itself, even Homer, is absorbed in the Shakespearian myth; for Shakespeare, to snatch a feather from the fiery wing of Coleridge, is "the Spinosistic deity, an omnipresent creativeness."

Thou whose rapt spirit beheld the vision of human existence, "the wheel in the middle of the wheel, and the spirit of the living creature within," and wrotest thy inspirations, how shall we describe thy faculty? To paint lightning, and to give it no motion, is the doom of the baffled artist. Something, however, we may conceive of the Shakespearian faculty when we say that it consisted in a facility of feeling, an aptitude in following those trains of thought which constitute that undeviating propriety, in the consonance of the character with its action, and the passion with its language. Whether the poet followed the romancer or the chronicler in his conception of a dramatic character, he at the first step struck into that undeviating track of our humanity amid the accidents of its position. The progress of each dramatic personage was therefore a unity of diction and character, of sentiment and action: all was direct, for there was no effort where all was impulse; and the dramatic genius of Shakespeare, as if wholly unstudied, seems to have formed the habit of his intellectual cha-

racter. Was this unerring Shakespearian faculty an intuitive evidence, like certain axioms? or may we venture to fancy that our poet, as it were, had discovered the very mathematics of metaphysics?

Besides this facility of feeling, appropriating to itself the whole sphere of human existence, there is another characteristic of our national bard. He struck out a diction which I conceive will be found in no other poet. What is usually termed diction, would, applied to Shakespeare, be more definite, and its quality more happily explained, if we call it *expression*, and observed in what magic the Shakespearian expression lies. This diction has been subject to the censure of obscurity. Modern critics have ascribed the invention of our dramatic blank verse to Shakespeare; but Shakespeare was no inventor in the usual acceptation of the term, and assuredly was not of unrhymed metre: what, indeed, are imperfectly or rarely found among his tuneful predecessors and contemporaries, are the sweetness of his versification, combined with ceaseless imagery; we view the image through the transparency of the thought never disturbing it; it is neither a formal simile nor an expanded metaphor, — it is a single expression, a sensible image combined with an emotion.

THE "HUMOURS" OF JONSON.

JONSON studied "THE HUMOURS," and not the passions. What were these "humours"? The bard himself does not distinguish them from "manners:" —

"Their MANNERS, now called HUMOURS, feed the stage."

The ambiguity of the term has confounded it with humor itself: they are, however, so far distinct, that a "humour," that is, some absorbing singularity in a character, may not necessarily be very humorous; it may be only absurd.

When this term "humours" became popular, it sunk into a mystification. Every one suddenly had his "humour." It served on all occasions as an argument which closed all discussion. The impertinent insisted on the privilege of his "humour." "The idiot," who chose to be "apish," declared that a lock of hair fantastically hung, or the dancing feather in his cap, were his "humour." A moral quality, or an affection of the mind, was thus indiscriminately applied to things themselves, when they were objects of affectation or whim. The phrase was tossed about till it bore no certain meaning. Such indeed is the fate of all fashionable cant, — ephemera which, left to themselves, die away with their season.

The ludicrous incongruity of applying these physical qualities to moral acts, and apologizing for their caprices by their "humours," was too exquisitely ludicrous not to be seized on as the property of our comic satirists. Shakespeare and Jonson have given perpetuity to this term of the vocabulary in

vogue, and Jonson has dignified it by transferring it to his comic art. Shakespeare has personified these "humours" in that whimsical, blunt, grotesque Corporal Nym, the pith of whose reason and the chorus of whose tune are his "humours;" admirably contrasting with that other "humourist," his companion, ranting the fag-ends of tragedies "in Cambyses' vein." Jonson, more elaborate, according to his custom, could not quit his subject till he had developed the whole system in two comedies of "Every Man IN" and "Every Man OUT of his HUMOUR."

The vague term was least comprehended when most in use. Asper, the censor of the times,* desires Mitis, who had used it, "to answer what was meant:" Mitis, a neutralized man, "who never acts, and has therefore no character," can only reply, "Answer what?" The term was too plain or too obscure for that simple soul to attach any idea to a word current with all the world.

The philosopher then offers —

> "To give these ignorant well-spoken days
> Some taste of their abuse of this word HUMOUR."

This rejoices his friend Cordatus: —

> "Oh! do not let your purpose fall, good Asper:
> It cannot but arrive most acceptable,
> Chiefly to such as have the happiness
> Daily to see how *the poor innocent word*
> *Is racked and tortured.*"

It is then that Asper, or rather Jonson, plunges into a dissertation on "the elements," which, according to the ancient philosophy, compound the fragile body of man with the four "humours," or moistures.†

Had not this strange phrase been something more than a modish coinage, it had not endured so long and spread so

* In the Introduction to "Every Man out of his Humour."

† See Nares's "Glossary" for an account of these "humours" in their philosophical sense.

wide. Other temporary phrases of this nature were equally in vogue, nor have they escaped the vigilant causticity of Jonson. Such were "the vaporers" and "the jeerers;" but these had not substance in them to live, and Jonson only cast on them a side-glance. "The humours" were derived from a more elevated source than the airy nothingness of fashionable cant.

How "the humours" came into vogue, may, I think, be discovered. A work long famous, and of which multiplied editions, in all the languages of Europe, were everywhere spread, deeply engaged public attention: this work was "Huarté's Examen de Ingenios," translated into English as "the Examination of Men's Wits." It was long imagined that the Spaniard had drawn aside the veil from Nature herself, revealing among her varieties those of the human character. The secret, "to what profession a man will be most apt," must have taken in a wide circle of inquirers. In the fifth chapter, we learn that "the differences of men's wits depend on the hot, the moist, and the dry:" the system is carried on through "the elements" and "the humours." The natural philosophy is of the schools; but the author's anatomy of the brain amounted to a demonstration of the phenomenon, as it seemed to him. He, however, had struck out some hardy novelties and some mendacious illustrations. The system was long prevalent; and every one now conceived himself to be the passive agent of his predominant temperament or "humour," and looked for that page which was to discover to him his own genius. This work in its day made as great a sensation as the "Esprit" of Helvetius at a later time; and in effect resembled the phrenology of our day, and was as ludicrously applied. The first English version—for there are several—appeared in 1594; and we find, that, four years after, "the humours" were so rife that they served to plot a whole comedy, as well as to furnish an abundance of what they called "epigrams," or short satires of the reigning mode.

Jonson's intense observation was microscopical when turned to the minute evolutions of society, while his diversified learning at all times bore him into a nobler sphere of comprehension. This taste for reality, and this fulness of knowledge on whatever theme he chose, had a reciprocal action; and the one could not go without the other. Our poet doggedly set to "a humour" through its slightest anomalies, and, in the pride of his comic art, expanded his prototype. Yet this was but half the labor which he loved: his mind was stored with the most burdensome knowledge; and to the scholar the various erudition which he had so diligently acquired threw a more permanent light over those transient scenes which the painter of manners had so carefully copied.

The pertinacity of Jonson, in heaping such minute particularities of "a humour," has invariably turned his great dramatic personages into complete personifications of some single propensity, or mode of action; and thus the individual is changed into an abstract being. The passion itself is wholly there; but this man of one volition is thrown out of the common brotherhood of man, — an individual so artificially constructed as to include a whole species. Our poet, if we may decide by the system which he pursued, seems to have considered his prodigious dramatic characters as the conduit-pipes to convey the abundant waters which he had gathered into his deep cisterns.

It is surely evident that such elaborate dramatic personages were not extemporary creations thrown off in the heat of the pen. Our poet professed to instruct as much as to delight; and it was in the severity of thought and the austerity of his genius that his nobler conceptions arose. His studious habits have been amply ascertained. When he singled out "a humour," to possess himself of every trait of the anomalous dispositions he contemplated, he must gradually have accumulated, as they occurred, the particulars whence to form the aggregate; and like Swift, in his "Advice to Servants," in

his provident diligence he must have jotted down a mass such as we see so curiously unfolded in "the character of the persons" prefixed to "Every Man in his Humour," — a singular dramatic sketch. To this mass, with due labor and shaping, he gave the baptism of an expressive name, and conceived that a name would necessarily become a person. If he worked in this manner, as I believe he did, and "the characters" we have just seen confirm the suggestion, it sufficiently explains the space he required to contain his mighty and unmixed character, — the several made into one; and which we so frequently observe he was always reluctant to quit, while a stroke in his jottings remained untold. His cup, indeed, often runs over, and sometimes the dregs hang on our lips. We have had perhaps too many of these jottings.

But, if Jonson has been accused of having servilely given portraits, — and we have just seen in what an extraordinary way they are portraits, — his learning has also been alleged as something more objectionable in the dramatic art; and we have often heard something of the pedantry of Jonson.

In that elaborate personage, Sir Epicure Mammon, we have have not only the alchemist and the epicurean to answer that characterizing name, but we are not to be set free without enduring the obscure babble of "the projection" and "the projectors," — which assuredly cost some patient sweat of that curious brain, — and further being initiated into the gastronomic mysteries of the kitchens of the ancients. Volpone, and "the gentleman who loves not noise," his other masterpieces, like Sir Epicure Mammon, are of the same colossal character. In "the Fox" and "the Fly," the richest veins of antiquity are melted down into his own copious invention; nor had the ancients themselves a picture so perfect, or a scene so living, of those legacy-hunters, though that vice was almost a profession with them. If true learning in the art of the drama be peccant, our poet is a very saintly sinner; and Jonson indeed was, as Cleaveland has hailed his manes, —

"The wonder of a learned age."

The fate of Jonson has inflicted its penalties on his very excellences. Some modern critics, whose delicacy of taste in its natural feebleness could not strain itself to the vigor of Jonson, have strangely failed to penetrate into the depths of that mighty mind; and some modern poets have delivered their sad evidence, that for them the Coryphæus of our elder dramatists has become unintelligible. Of all our dramatists, Jonson, the Juvenal of our drama, alone professed to study the "humour" or manners of the age: but manners vanish with their generation; and, ere the century closes, even actors cannot be procured to personate characters of which they view no prototype. They remain as the triumphs of art and genius, for those who are studious of this rare combination; but they were the creatures of "the age," and not for "all time," as Jonson himself energetically and prophetically has said of Shakespeare.*

Shadwell, who has left us nearly twenty comedies, and "the god of whose idolatry" was Jonson, in his copious prefaces and prologues and epilogues, overflows with his egotistical admiration of "the humours." In his preface to "the Sullen Lovers," he says that we are not to expect the intrigue of comedy, plot and business, lest he should "let fall the humour." And in "the Humourist," he says, "Mr. Jonson was very unjustly taxed for personating particular men," in the writing of his humours; "but it will ever be the fate of them that write the humours of the town." We have more of this in the dedication of "the Virtuoso," where we are told that "four of the humours are entirely new." We have his definition of these "humours" in the epilogue to "the Humourists," and which is neatly expressed:—

"A humour is the bias of the mind,
By which, with violence, 'tis one way inclined:
It makes our action lean on one side still;
And, in all changes, that way bends the will."

* "He was not of an age, but for all time."—*Jonson.*

It is singular, that, as Jonson has been somewhat censured for drawing so elaborately these artificial men and their humours, Shadwell should have adopted the notion, and made it the staple of his comic invention.

When men were more insulated, and society was less mo notonous, than at the present day, those whom we now call humourists, without, however, any allusion to the system of the humours, and whom we now rarely meet with, allowed their peculiar tastes and fancies to be more prominent in their habits, so as to make them more observable, and more the subject of ridicule, than we find them in the present level decorum of society.

DRAYTON.

"THE POLY-OLBION" of DRAYTON is a stupendous work; "a strange Herculean toil," as the poet himself has said; and it was the elaborate production of many years. The patriotic bard fell a victim to its infelicitous but glorious conception; and posterity may discover a grandeur in this labor of love, which was unfelt by his contemporaries.

The "Poly-olbion" is a chorographical description of England and Wales; an amalgamation of antiquarianism, of topography, and of history; materials not the most ductile for the creations of poetry. This poem is said to have the accuracy of a road-book; and the poet has contributed some notices, which add to the topographic stores of CAMDEN: for this has our poet extorted an alms of commendation from such a niggardly antiquary as Bishop Nicholson, who confesses that this work affords "a much truer account of this kingdom than could be well expected from the pen of a poet."

The grand theme of this poet was his fatherland! The Muse of Drayton passes by every town and tower: each tells some tale of ancient glory, or of some "worthy" who must never die. The local associations of legends and customs are animated by the personifications of mountains and rivers; and often, in some favorite scenery, he breaks forth with all the emotion of a true poet. The imaginative critic has described the excursions of our Muse with responsive sympathy. "He has not," says Lamb, "left a rivulet so narrow that it may be stepped over without honorable mention, and has associated

hills and streams with life and passion beyond the dreams of old mythology." But the journey is long, and the conveyance may be tedious: the reader, accustomed to the decasyllabic or heroic verse, soon finds himself breathless among the protracted and monotonous Alexandrines, unless he should relieve his ear from the encumbrance by resting on the cæsura, and thus divide those extended lines by the alternate grace of a ballad-stanza. The artificial machinery of Drayton's personifications of mountains and rivers, though these may be often allowed the poet, yet they seem more particularly ludicrous, as they are crowded together on the maps prefixed to each county, where this arbitrary mythology, masculine and feminine, are to be seen standing by the heads of rivers, or at the entrances of towns.

This extraordinary poem remains without a parallel in the poetical annals of any people; and it may excite our curiosity to learn its origin. The genealogy of poetry is often suspicious; but I think we may derive the birth of the "Polyolbion" from LELAND'S magnificent view of his designed work on "Britain," and that hint expanded by the "Britannia" of CAMDEN, who inherited the mighty industry, without the poetical spirit, of LELAND: DRAYTON embraced both.

It is a nice question to decide how far history may be admitted into poetry: like "Addison's Campaign," the poem may end in a rhymed gazette. And, in any other work of invention, a fiction, by too free an infusion of historical matter, can only produce that monster called "the Romance of History," — a nonsensical contradiction in terms, for neither can be both; or that other seductive and dangerous association of real persons and fictitious incidents, — the historical romance! It is remarkable that DRAYTON censures DANIEL, his brother poet, for being *too historical* in his "Civil Wars," and thus transgressing the boundaries of history and poetry, of truth and invention. Of these just boundaries, however, he himself had no clear notion. Drayton, in his "Baron's Wars," sunk

into a grave chronicler; and, in the "Poly-olbion," we see his Muse treading a labyrinth of geography, of history, and of topography!

The author of the "Poly-olbion" may truly be considered as the inventor of a class of poems peculiar to our country, and which, when I was young, were popular or fashionable. These are loco-descriptive poems. Such were Denham's "Cooper's Hill," * and its numerous, and some happy, imitations. In these local descriptions, some favored spot in the landscape opens to the poet not only the charm of its natural appearance, but in the prospect lie scenes of the past. Imagination, like a telescope fixed on the spot, brings nearer to his eyes those associations which combine emotion with description; and the contracted spot, whence the bard scattered the hues of his fancy, is aggrandized by noble truths.

The first edition of the "Poly-olbion," in 1613, consisted of eighteen "songs," or cantos, and every one enriched by the notes and illustrations of the poet's friend, our great national antiquary, SELDEN, whose avarice of words in these recondite stores conceals almost as many facts as he affords phrases. This volume was ill received by the incurious readers of that age. Drayton had vainly imagined that the nobles and gentlemen of England would have felt a filial interest in the tale of their fathers, commemorated in these poetic annals, and an honorable pride in their domains here so graphically pictured. But no voice, save those of a few melodious brothers, cheered the lonely lyrist, who had sung on every mountain, and whose verse had flowed with every river. After a hopeless suspension of nine years, the querulous author sent forth the concluding volume to join its neglected brother. It ap-

* Dr. Johnson has ascribed the invention of local poetry to Denham, who, he thought, had "traced a new scheme of poetry, copied by Garth and Pope, after whose names little will be gained by an enumeration of smaller poets." Johnson and the critics of his day were wholly unacquainted with the fathers of our poetry; nor is it true that we have not had loco-descriptive poems since Garth and Pope, which may rank with theirs.

peared with a second edition of the first part, which is nothing more than the unsold copies of the first, to which the twelve additional "songs" are attached, separately paged. These last come no longer enriched by the notes of Selden, or even embellished by those fanciful maps which the unfortunate poet now found too costly an ornament. Certain accidental marks of the printer betray the bibliographical secret, that the second edition was in reality but the first.* The preface to the second part is remarkable for its inscription, in no good humor, —

TO ANY THAT WILL READ IT!

There was yet no literary public to appeal to, to save the neglected work which the great SELDEN had deemed worthy of his studies: but there was, as the poet indignantly designates them, "a cattle, *odi profanum vulgus et arceo*, of which I account them, be they never so great." And "the cattle" conceived that there was nothing in this island worthy studying. We had not yet learned to esteem ourselves at a time

* Perhaps none of our poets have been more luckless in their editors than Drayton. He himself published a folio edition of his works in 1619; but some of his more interesting productions, now lying before me, are contained in a small volume, 1631, — the year in which he died.

A modern folio edition was published by Dodsley in 1748. The titlepage assures us that this volume contains *all* his writings; while a later edition, in four volumes 8vo, 1753, pretends to supply the deficiencies of the former, which at length Dodsley had discovered; but it is awkwardly done by an *Appendix*, and is still deficient. The rapid demand for a new edition of Drayton between 1748 and 1753 bears a suspicious aspect. An intelligent bibliopolist, Mr. Rodd, informs me that this *octavo* edition is in fact the identical *folio*, only arranged to the octavo form by a contrivance, well known among printers, at the time of printing the folio. The separation of the additional poems in the Appendix confirms this suggestion.

Of the "Poly-olbion," the edition called the second, of 1622, has fetched an excessive price; while the first, considered incomplete, may be procured at a very moderate price. The possessor of the first edition, however, enjoys the whole treasure of Selden's lore. Mr. Southey, in his "Specimens of Our Ancient Poets," has reprinted the entire "Poly-olbion" with his usual judgment; but, unhappily, the rich stores of Selden the publishers probably deemed superfluous. Drayton is worthy of a complete edition of his works.

when six editions of Camden's "Britannia," in the original Latin, were diffusing the greatness of England throughout Europe.

But, though this poet devoted much of his life to this great antiquarian and topographic poem, he has essayed his powers in almost every species of poetry: fertility of subject, and fluency of execution, are his characteristics. He has written historical narratives too historical; heroic epistles hardly Ovidian; elegies on several occasions, or rather domestic epistles, of a Horatian cast; pastorals, in which there is a freshness of imagery, breathing with the life of nature; and songs and satire and comedy. In comedy he had not been unsuccessful; but in satire he was considered more indignant than caustic. There is one species of poetry, rare among us, in which he has been eminently successful: his "Nymphidia, or Court of Faerie," is a model of the grotesque, those arabesques of poetry, those lusory effusions on chimerical objects. There are grave critics who would deny the poet the liberty allowed to the painter. The "Nymphidia" seems to have been ill understood by some modern critics. The poet has been censured for "neither imparting nor feeling that half-believing seriousness which enchants us in the wild and magical touches of Shakspeare;" but the poet designed an exquisitely ludicrous fiction. Drayton has, however, relieved the grotesque scenes by rising into the higher strains of poetry, such as Gray might not have disdained.

It was the misfortune of Drayton not to have been a popular poet; which we may infer from his altercations with his booksellers, and from their frequent practice of prefixing new titlepages, with fresher dates, to the first editions of his poems That he was also in perpetual quarrel with his Muse, appears by his frequent alteration of his poems. He often felt that curse of an infelicitous poet, that his diligence was more active than his creative power. Drayton was a poet of volume; but his genius was peculiar: from an unhappy facility in composi-

tion, in reaching excellence he too often declined into mediocrity. A modern reader may be struck by the purity and strength of his diction: his strong descriptive manner lays hold of the fancy; but he is always a poet of reason, and never of passion. He cannot be considered as a poet of mediocrity, who has written so much above that level; nor a poet who can rank among the highest class, who has often flattened his spirit by its redundance.

There was another cause, besides his quarrel with his Muse, which threw a shade over the life of Drayton. He had been forward to greet James the First, on his accession to the throne of England, with a congratulatory ode; but for some cause, which has not been revealed, he tells us, "he suffered shipwreck by his forward pen." The king appears to have conceived a personal dislike to the bard, — a circumstance not usual with James towards either poets or flatterers. It seems to arise from some state-matter; for Drayton tells us, —

"I feare, as I do stabbing, this word, state."

According to Oldys, Drayton appears to have been an agent in the Scottish king's intercourse with his English friends: some unlucky incident probably occurred, which might have indisposed the monarch towards his humble friend. The unhappy result of his court to the new sovereign cast a sour and melancholy humor over his whole life: Drayton, in his "Elegy" to his brother-poet, Sandys, has perpetuated his story.

THE

PSYCHOLOGICAL HISTORY OF RAWLEIGH.

Rawleigh is a great name in our history, and fills a space in our imagination. His military and maritime genius looked for new regions, to found, perhaps, his own dominion. Yet was this hero the courtier, holding "the glass of fashion;" and the profound statesman, whose maxims and whose counsels, Milton, the severe Milton, carefully collected; and the poet, who, when he found a master-genius lingering in a desert, joyed to pay him the homage of his protection. Rawleigh, who in his youthful hours, and even through his vagrant voyages, was at all times a student, in the ripeness of his knowledge was a sage. Thus he, who seemed through all his restless days to have lived only for his own age, was the true servant of posterity.

If ever there have been men whose temperaments and dispositions have harmonized within themselves faculties seemingly incompatible, with an equability of force combining the extremes of our nature, it would not be difficult to believe that Sir Walter Rawleigh was one of this rarest species. Various and opposite were his enterprises; but, whichever was the object, his aptitude was prompt: for he is equally renowned for his active and his contemplative powers; in neither he seems to have held a secondary rank. And he has left the nation a collection of his writings, which claim for their author the just honors of being one of the founders of our literature.

This is the perspective view of his *character* as it appears at a distance. His was a strange and adventurous *life:* the shifting scenes seem gathering together as in a tale of fiction, full of as surprising incidents and as high passions, and as intricate and mysterious, as the involutions of a well-invented fable. And, in this various history of a single individual, should we be dazzled by the haughtiness of prosperity, and even be startled by the baseness of humiliation, still shall we find one sublime episode more glorious than the tale, and as pathetic a close as ever formed the catastrophe of a tragic romance. I pursue this history as far as concerns its psychological development.

It was the destiny of Rawleigh to be the artificer of his own fortunes, and in that arduous course to pass through pinching ways and sharp turns. The younger son of a family whose patrimony had not lasted with their antiquity, he had nothing left but his enterprise and his sword: his mind had decided on his calling. The romantic adventures of the Spanish in new regions had early kindled the master-mind which takes its lasting bent from its first strong impulse. The Spaniards and their new world, "the treasures and the paradises" which they enjoyed, haunted his dreams to his latest days. The age in which the great struggle had commenced in Europe for the independence of nations and of faiths was as favorable to the indulgence of the military passion as it was pregnant with political instruction. No period in modern history was so prodigal of statesmen and of heroes; and Rawleigh was to be both.

Two noble schools for military education were opened for our youthful volunteer: among the Protestants in France, when they assembled their own armies, and subsequently in the Netherlands, under the Prince of Orange, Rawleigh learned the discipline of a valorous but a wary leader, and beheld in Don John of Austria the hardihood of a presumptuous commander, whose "self-confidence could overcome the

greatest difficulties, yet in his judgment so weak, that he could not manage the least."

The captain who had fleshed his sword in many a field now cast his fortunes in that other element which led Columbus to discovery, and Pizarro to conquest. Rawleigh had an uterine brother, whom he justly called his "true brother,"—Sir Humphrey Gilbert, a great navigator, and the projector of a new passage to the Indies. An expedition was fitted out by them to colonize some parts of North America: his first maritime essay was frustrated by a disastrous accident. But the intrepid activity of Rawleigh allowed no pause; and now it turned against the rebellious kerns of Ireland. His disputes with Grey, the lord-deputy, brought them before the council-board in the presence of the queen. Our adventurer knew how to value this fortunate opportunity. His eloquent tale struck his lordly adversary dumb, and was not slightly noticed by Elizabeth. The soldier of fortune was now hanging loosely about the circle of the court, watchful of another fortunate moment to attract the queen's attention. There was a very remarkable disposition in this extraordinary man, as I have elsewhere noticed, of practising petty artifices in the affairs of life. The gay cavalier flung his rich embroidered mantle across the plashy spot for an instantaneous foot-cloth; not unknowing that an act of gallantry was sure to win the susceptible coquetry of his royal mistress. His personal grace, and his tall stature, and the charm of his voluble elocution, when once admitted into the presence, were irresistible. On the same system as he had cast his mantle before the queen, he scratched on a window-pane, likely to catch her majesty's eye, that verse expressive of his "desire" and "his fear to climb," to which the queen condescended to add her rhyme.

The man of genius was not yet entangled in the meshes of political parties, and was still contemplating on an imaginary land north of the Gulf of Florida, as studious of the art of navigation as he had been of the art of war. He has left a

number of essays on both these subjects, composed for Prince Henry in the succeeding reign. He was already in favor with the queen; for she sanctioned a renewal of the unfortunate expedition under his brother. Rawleigh had the largest vessel built under his own eye, for he was skilful in naval architecture; and he named it "the Rawleigh," anticipating the day when it should leave that name to a city or a kingdom. It was on this occasion that the queen commanded Rawleigh to present to his brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, a precious gem, on which was engraven an anchor guided by a lady, graciously desiring in return the picture of the hardy adventurer. Such were the arts of female coquetry which entered so admirably into her system of policy, kindling such personal enthusiasm in the professed lovers of their royal mistress, while she resigned her heroes to their enterprises at their own honorable cost of their fortunes or their lives. In this second expedition, Sir Humphrey Gilbert realized a discovery of what was then called "the Newfoundland," of which he took possession for England with the due formalities; but, on his return, his slender bark foundered, and thus obscurely perished one of the most enlightened of that heroic race of our maritime discoverers, — the true fathers of future colonies.

Rawleigh, unrolling an old map which had been presented to her royal father, charmed the queen by the visions which had long charmed himself. Her majesty granted letters-patent to secure to him the property of the countries which he might discover or might conquer. Rawleigh minutely planned the future operations; and, by the captains he sent (for the queen would not part with her favorite), that country was discovered to which had the royal maiden not so eagerly given the name of "Virginia," had probably borne that of Rawleigh; for subsequently he betrayed this latent design when he proposed founding a city with that romantic name.

But the pressing interests of our home-affairs withdrew his mind from undiscovered dominions. Rawleigh was a chief

adviser of Elizabeth in the great Spanish invasion. He was eminently active in various expeditions, and not less serviceable in parliament. The ceaseless topic of his counsels, and the frequent exercise of his pen, was the alarming aggrandizement of the Spanish power. At this day, perhaps, we can form no adequate notion of that Catholic and colossal dominion which Rawleigh dwells on. "No prince in the west hath spread his wing far over his nest but the Spaniard, and made many attempts to make themselves masters of all Europe." Possibly he may have ascribed too great an influence to the treasures of India, which seem to have been always exaggerated: however, he assures us, and as a statesman he may have felt a conviction, that "its Indian gold endangers and disturbs all the nations of Europe; it creeps into counsels, purchases intelligence, and sets bound loyalty at liberty in the greatest monarchies. When they dare not with their own forces invade, they basely entertain the traitors and vagabonds of all nations." We have here a complete picture of those arts of policy, which, in the revolutionary system of France, endangered Europe; and which may yet, should ever a colossal power again overshadow its independent empires.

To clip "the wing that had spread far over its nest," by cutting off the uninterrupted supplies of the plate-fleets of Spain, was a course in which the queen only perceived the earnest loyalty of the intrepid adventurer; nor was that loyalty less for its perfect accordance with his own personal concerns.

Rawleigh and his joint adventurers in these discoveries were carrying on their expeditions at the risk of their private fortunes; and it appears that his own zeal had beguiled young men to change their immovable lands for light pinnaces. The prudential ministers looked on with a cold eye; and the economical sovereign, as she was wont, rewarded her hero in her own way. Elizabeth bestowed titular honors, and cut out a seigniory in Ireland from the Earl of Desmond's domains,

which Rawleigh's own sword had chiefly won; twelve thousand acres, yielding no rents; dismantled farms and tenantless hamlets, — an estate of fire and blood! A more substantial patent was conferred on him, — to license taverns for the sale of wines; and at length it was enlarged to levy tonnage and poundage, specifying that the grant was "to sustain his great charges in the discovery of remote countries."

This was one of those odious monopolies by which the par simonious sovereign pretended to reward the services of the individual by the infliction of a great public grievance, infinitely more intolerable than any pension-list; for every monopoly was a traffic admitting all sorts of abuses. Rawleigh's inventive faculty often broke forth into humbler schemes in domestic affairs. He seems first to have perceived, in the expansion of society, the difficulty of communication for the wants of life. He projected an office for universal agency; and in this he anticipated that useful intelligence which we now recognize by the term of advertisement. New enterprises and ceaseless occupation were the aliment of that restless and noble spirit. But these monopolies, severely exacted, provoking complaints and contests, were one among other causes which may account for Rawleigh's unpopularity, even at his meridian.

To his absorbing devotion to obtain the queen's favor, he has himself ascribed his numerous enemies. While Elizabeth listened to his ingenious solutions of all her inquiries, many close at hand took umbrage lest they themselves were being supplanted; while he himself, with marked expressions, disdained all popularity. Hence, from opposite quarters, we learn how haughtily his genius bore him in commanding the world under him. And there is no doubt, as Aubrey tells us, that he was "damnably proud." Even in the height of court favor, this great man was obnoxious to the people. This we see by an anecdote of Tarleton, the jester of Elizabeth, famed for his extemporal acting. Performing before the queen,

while Rawleigh stood by her majesty, shuffling a pack of cards, and pointing to the royal box, the jesting comedian exclaimed, "See, the knave commands the queen!" Her majesty frowned; but, the audience applauding, the queen, ever chary in checking any popular feeling, reserved her anger till the following day, when Tarleton was banished from the royal presence. Nor was Rawleigh less unpopular in the succeeding reign, when the mob hooted this great man, and when this great man condescended to tell them how much he despised such rogues and varlets! The inconsiderate multitude, in the noble preface to his great work, he compared to "dogs, who always bark at those they know not, and whose nature is to accompany one another in these clamors."

However busied by the discovery of remote countries, the armed ships of Rawleigh often brought into port a Spanish prize. The day arrived,—the short but golden day,—when, as his contemporary and a secretary of state has told us, "he who was first to roll through want, and disability to exist, before he came to a repose," betrayed a sudden affluence—in the magnificence about him—in the train of his followers, when he seemed to be the rival of the chivalrous Essex,—in the gorgeousness of his dress, from the huge diamond which buttoned his feather, to his shoes powdered with pearls, darting from every point of his person the changeful light of countless jewels. In this habiliment, fitted to be the herald of that goddess of beauty to which Elizabeth was familiarly compared, beside the queen during her royal progresses, stood the captain of her guard; and her eyes were often solaced as they dwelt on the minion of fortune, her own prosperous adventurer: it was with secret satisfaction that she knew his treasure was not taken out of her exchequer. It could only have been some great Spanish galleon, like that of "the Madre de Dios," which furnished Rawleigh with that complete suit of armor of solid silver which fixed all eyes at the tilt; or which went to build the stately mansion of Sherborne,

and to plan its fanciful gardens and groves, drawing the river through the rocks. Curious in horticulture as in the slightest arts he practised, Rawleigh's hands transplanted the first orange-trees which breathed in this colder clime, as he had given Ireland the Virginian potato, and England the Virginian tobacco, and perhaps the delicious ananas. But Sherborne was church land. It is said that Sir Walter had often cast a wistful eye on it as it lay in his journeys from Devonshire. It gave umbrage to some in Church and State, that, by frightening a timid Bishop of Salisbury, he had prevailed on him to alienate the manor of Sherborne from his see in favor of the crown, that it might the more securely be transferred to him who had coveted it, till another coveter, in the despicable Carr, plundered him who had despoiled the diocese.

A genius versatile as ambitious, moving in the eventful court of a female sovereign, though often musing on "remote countries" or Spanish galleons, could not stand as a mere spectator amid the agitated amphitheatre of politics, nor in the luxuriance of courtly idleness save himself from softer, but not always less fatal, intrigues. Rawleigh was the victim of love and of politics.

On his first entrance to a court-life, Rawleigh found Burleigh and Leicester watchful of each other. They were the heads of dark factions which clouded the court of Elizabeth, and crooked were the ways our aspirant had to wind. Leicester seems to have been an early patron of Rawleigh, by means of his nephew, Sir Philip Sidney. At length, perceiving his ascendency over the queen, the great lord, to overturn this idol of womanish caprice, introduced his youthful son-in-law, the famous and unfortunate Essex; nor had he, who himself had been a reigning favorite, miscalculated on the fascination of a new lover. The contest for the royal smile became too apparent: ruptures and reconciliations followed, till death closed these eventful jealousies. Rawleigh

had glided over to the opposition under the subtle and the plotting Cecil.

An intrigue of less guiltiness than these dark machinations of heartless men banished Rawleigh from court. In the dalliance of the ladies of the privy-chamber, through the long tedious days of audience, he once too wittily threw out an observation on that seductive but spotless circle, the maids of honor, who, he declared, were "like witches, who could do hurt, but do no good." There was one, however, the bewitching Throgmorton, who was all goodness: the impassioned knight was resistless; and subsequently the law consecrated what love had already irrevocably joined. But envy with its evil eye was peering. The Queen of Virgins, implacable in love-treasons, sent the lovers to the Tower.

In this desperate predicament, Rawleigh had lost in an hour the proud work of his highest ambition, — the favor of his mistress-sovereign. The forlorn hero had recourse to one of those prompt and petty stratagems in which he was often so dexterous. At his prison-window, one day, he beheld the queen passing in her barge, and suddenly raved like a distracted lover. He entreated to be allowed to go in disguise to rest his eyes once more on the idol of his heart; and, when the governor refused this extraordinary request of a state-prisoner, he, in his agony, struggled. Their daggers were clutched; till Sir Arthur Gorge, seeing "the cold iron walking about," rushed between these terrible combatants. All this, Gorge, then a friend of Rawleigh, minutely narrates in a letter to Cecil; at the same time gently hinting, that, if the minister deem it proper, it may be communicated to the queen, that such was the miserable condition of Rawleigh, that he fell distracted only at the distant sight of her majesty. This theatrical scene was got up for the nonce, and served as a prologue to another characteristic effusion, — a letter of raving gallantry, which Orlando Furioso himself might have penned, potent with the condensed essence of old romance. The amo-

rist in his prison thus sorrows: "I was wont to behold her riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, walking like Venus; the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks like a nymph; sometime sitting in the shade like a goddess, sometime singing like an angel." Sir Walter knew how high the pulse beat of his royal mistress, now aged by her sixtieth year. He obtained his freedom, but was banished the presence. And now, cast out of court favor, and calling himself "the queen's captive," Rawleigh, whom many had feared, and few had not admired, found that even fools had the courage to vex a banished favorite.

There was no hope; yet Rawleigh, in his exile at his own Sherborne, addressed more than one letter to the queen, warning her of "the dangers of a Spanish faction in Scotland." But the letters were received in silence. Rawleigh then attempted to awaken Cecil to the state of Ireland, then on the point of exploding into a rebellion. He compares himself to the Trojan soothsayer, "who cast his spear against the wooden horse, and was not believed." The language of complaint was not long tolerable to a spirit which would have commanded the world; and at once he took his flight from the old to the new, and his fleet and himself were again buoyant on the ocean.

This was Rawleigh's first voyage to "the empire of Guiana," as it was then called. His interesting narrative Hume has harshly condemned, as containing "the most palpable lies ever imposed on the credulity of mankind." Our romantic adventurer has incurred censure for his own credulity in search of mines which appear to have existed, and of "the golden city," which lying Spaniards had described; and he had even his honor impeached by the baffled speculators of his own day, whom he had beguiled with his dreams: but he who sacrificed life and fortune in a great enterprise left the world a pledge that he at least believed in his own tale.

Rawleigh, like other men of genius, was influenced by the spirit of the age, which was the spirit of discovery; and, to the brave and the resolved, what could be impracticable which opened a new world? The traditions of the Spaniards had been solemnly recorded in the collections of their voyages, and had been sanctioned by the reports of Rawleigh's own people: and he himself had fed his eyes and his dreams on the novel aspect of those fertile plains and branching rivers, inhabited by fifty nations; on animals of a new form, and birds of a new plumage; and on a vegetable world of trees and plants and flowers and fruits, on which the eye dwelt for the first time, — a fresh creation, "the face of whose earth hath not been torn, nor the virtue and salt of the soil spent by manurance."

The origin of those puerile tales which the Europeans brought home with them has not been traced. Some have the air of religious legends, descriptive of the Paradise of the Blacks; such as that chimerical Manoa, where, they said, "the king had golden images of every object on earth." Or were such marvellous fictions the shrewd inventions of these children of Nature, more cunning than the men of Europe, stupefied and credulous from their sovereign passion? When the Indians on the coast found that the whites seemed insatiate of gold and pearls, they fostered the madness, directing their strange invaders far up into the land, — to the great city of Manoa, the El Dorado of the Spaniards, and which no one ever reached. In this manner, they probably designed to rid themselves of their ambiguous guests; sending them to stray in the deserts of primeval forests, or to sail along interminable rivers, wrecked amid rapid falls.

Rawleigh endured many miseries; and, on his return, his narrative was deemed fabulous. The pathos of his language, however, perpetuates his dignified affliction: "Of the little remaining fortune I had, I have wasted in effect all herein. I have undergone many constructions, been accompanied with

many sorrows, with labor, hunger, heat, sickness, and peril. From myself I have deserved no thanks; for I am returned a beggar, and withered."

An enterprise which was, as he himself considered it to be, national, crushed the resources of the individual. He assures us that he might have enriched himself, had "it become the former fortune in which he once lived, and sorted with all the offices of honor, which by her majesty's grace he held that day in England, for him *to go journeys of picory:*" that is, in Gondomar's plain Spanish, "piracy:" for the Spaniards applied the term *picarro*, a rogue or thief, to every one sailing in their forbidden seas. The dedication of his narrative, though directed to Howard and Cecil, was evidently addressed to "the lady of ladies," who, however, could not break her enchanted silence.

Spain trembled at the efforts of a single hero of England: she seemed to anticipate her uncertain dominion over that new world. Spain, though proud and mighty, standing on her golden feet, yet found them weak as unbaked clay, while her treasure-fleets were either burned or sunk, or carried into our ports. But at home there were those who dreaded the ascendency of that bold spirit, which, even in his present sad condition, asserted that "there were men worthy to be kings of these dominions, and who, by the queen's grace and leave would undertake it of themselves." His adversaries would cloak their private envy under the fair color of the public safety, or seemed wise with prudential scepticism. Yet the dauntless soul of Rawleigh, amid his distresses, despatched two ships, under his devoted Keymis, to keep up the intercourse with the weak colony he had left behind: this was the second voyage to Guiana, which only increased the anxiety for a third, which soon followed.

It is a curious instance of that alarm of jealousy prevalent with the favorites of those days, that, during the time of Rawleigh's disgrace at court, merely his sudden appearance in the

metropolis, as the news is cautiously indicated, "gave cause of discontent to some other;" that is, the reigning favorite, Essex. Possibly there might be some cause; for the writer tells that Rawleigh was "in good hope to return into grace:"* but this restorative was not then administered to the lorn stroller from Sherborne. The queen was imperturbable.

The royal anger of Elizabeth never interfered with her policy, nor dulled her sagacity. Two years after, in 1596, it was decided to attack the Spanish fleet in their own harbors, according to a plan laid down by Rawleigh as far back as in 1588. He was now wanted; and therefore he was remembered as far as his appointment, to be one of the four commanders in the famous expedition against Cadiz. Essex, as commander-in-chief, betrayed his incompetence; and Rawleigh, the prompt energy of his military and his maritime abilities. Essex, at all times his rival, and never his friend, saw his own lustre dusked by the eminence of his inferior; and, on his return, fatally read in the eyes of his royal mistress the first omen of his decline. During his absence, his recommendation of Sir Thomas Bodley for the secretaryship of state had been rejected, and the hated Cecil had triumphed. Rawleigh now undertook a more difficult affair than the victory of Cadiz, — he effected an amicable arrangement between Cecil and Essex: and this seems to have been a most grateful service to the queen; for, a month afterwards, we find him again at court. Five years must have elapsed, — so long the queen could preserve the royalty of her anger.

Restored to the queen's favor, the lover had lost nothing of his fascination. The very day on which Cecil led Rawleigh in "as captain of the guard," he rode in the evening with the queen, and held a private conference, where probably many secrets and counsels were divulged, too long and too proudly suppressed.† All this was done in the absence of Essex, but

* Lodge's "Illustrations of British History," iii. 67.

† Sidney Letters, ii. 45.

not without his consent; for the three enemies were now to be friends.

The second great expedition followed. Again Essex betrayed his inexperience and his failure; while Rawleigh, in a brilliant action, took Fayal. The reception of Essex at court levelled his ambition; and he retreated from the queen's reproaches, sick at heart, to bury himself in sullen seclusion. The remainder of his days exhibits a series of disturbed acts, in the continued conflict between his own popularity and the variable favor of the queen. To complete this tale of political intrigues, we have a letter, remarkable for its style, its matter, and its object, from Rawleigh to Cecil, urging the annihilation of "the tyrant," before "it is too late," in terms hardly ambiguous enough to save Rawleigh from the charge of having hurried on the fate of Essex, at whose execution he shed tears;* and in the confession of one of Essex's desperate advisers, in their mad rising, we learn that the earl had fixed on Rawleigh to be got rid of.

If we reflect a moment on this triumvirate of political friends, — and Cecil secretly assured the Scottish monarch that "he and they would never live under one apple-tree," — we may see how the wiles and jealousies of love are not more fatal than those of intriguing statesmen. Rawleigh, for a purpose, reconciles Essex with Cecil; but, in reality, the three

* When Rawleigh was himself in the place where he had put Essex, — on the scaffold, — he solemnly declared that "he had no hand in his blood, and was none of them that procured his death." How are we to reconcile this declaration with the extraordinary letter which first appeared in Murdin's Collection, and which, Hume asserts, "contains the strongest proofs to the contrary?" Mr. Lodge understands the advice of Rawleigh in the very worst sense: Mr. Tytler, with ingenuity, suggests that Cecil, with "a prospective wariness, which — not satisfied with deceiving his contemporaries — provided *blinds for posterity*," procured Rawleigh to address this letter to him; and, in a word, that, in composing this energetic epistle, he was not so much the writer as the agent in the plot. I am more disposed to believe, that, when Rawleigh wrote so remarkable a letter, he was fully aware of its import, and looked forwards to the result.

alike bear a mutual antipathy. When Essex in disgrace lay sick at home, and the queen, half-repentant in her severity, sent a friendly message to the earl, this appearance of returning favor towards Essex startled Rawleigh, who is seized with sickness in his turn; and the queen, at once the royal slave and mistress of her court-lovers, is compelled to send him a cordial of an equivalent kindness; and both these political patients were cured by the same prescription.

Cecil and Rawleigh paused not till they laid the head of Essex on the block; and that day sealed their own fortunes; for, left without a rival, they became rivals to each other. "Those," said Rawleigh on the scaffold, "who set me against him, set themselves afterwards against me, and were my greatest enemies." This may be placed among the confessions of criminal friendships!

Cecil "bore no love to Rawleigh," tells a contemporary; but we know more than contemporaries, and we possess secrets which Rawleigh could not discover while Elizabeth was on the throne, though a lurking suspicion of the hollowness of his friend "Robin" may have lain on his mind when he wrote this verse on the ambidextrous Talleyrand, who through all changes —

"Still kept on the mountain, and left us on the plain."

It was while this subdolous minister was holding most intimate intercourse with Rawleigh, while his son was placed under his guardian care at Sherborne, and he himself, with Lord Cobham, his brother-in-law, was there a guest, that this extraordinary Machiavel was daily working at the destruction of both his friends! This was effectually done by instilling into the Scottish monarch antipathies never to be uprooted. On the demise of the queen, Rawleigh was for raising up an English against a Scottish party: he was for keeping the government in their own hands; and looking on the successor to the English throne as a foreigner, and his people as a needy

race, would have only admitted him on terms; or, as Aubrey hints, was for "setting up a commonwealth." Little dreamed Rawleigh that he was already sold, and disposed of; that his friend, Secretary Cecil, was surrounding Durham House, Rawleigh's town residence, by domestic and midnight spies; and, as the secretary was wont, laying traps to decoy his associate in the councils of Elizabeth into something which might be shifted into a semblance of treason against the future sovereign.*

The train so covertly laid, the mine was sprung at the due hour. Rawleigh's reception by the king was the prognostic of his fall. Rawleigh announced, James exclaimed, *more suo*, "Rawleigh, Rawleigh! o' my saul, mon, I have heard *rawly* of thee!"† Cecil, who had participated in the fall of Essex, the chief of the Scottish party, all expected would have shared in the same royal repulse. Lady Kildare once aptly described Cecil, when she threatened "to break the neck of that weasel;" and afterwards the Scottish monarch, admiring the quick shiftings and keen scent of the crafty creature in the playful style of the huntsman, characterized his minister, in his kennel of courtiers, as his "little beagle." "The weasel" had all along, moving to and fro, kept his unobserved course; and, to the admiration of all, now "came out of the chamber like a giant, to run his race for honor and fortune." That astute Machiavel had long prepared stanch friends for himself in well-paid Scots. James was hardly seated on his new throne, when his minister opened one of his political exhibitions by the incomprehensible Cobham conspiracy; and this ingenious artificer of state-plots had knotted the present with one apparently more real: but, though they would not

* The extraordinary means of the duplicity of this wily minister are stated by Mr. TYTLER, in the Appendix to his "Life of Rawleigh."

† As *Rawleigh*, like all his contemporaries, including Shakespeare, wrote his name diversely, so that we are at a loss to pronounce it, this spontaneous sally of the Scottish monarch reveals its real pronunciation; which is also confirmed by a sort of epigram of that day.

hold together, they served to put his friend on his memorable trial. When the eloquence of Rawleigh had baffled his judges, and the evidence failed, Cecil, then sitting in court in the character of a friend, secretly conveyed an insidious letter, sufficient to serve as an ambiguous plea for a mysterious conviction. Rawleigh was judicially but illegally condemned; and the affair terminated in a burlesque execution, where men were led to the block, and no one suffered decapitation.*

A remarkable circumstance, however, occurred, which must not be passed over in this psychological history of Rawleigh. In the Tower, during the examination of the weak and worthless Cobham, who was shifting evidence, Rawleigh affected a recklessness of life; suddenly he inflicted upon himself what his enemies afterwards called "the guilty blow in the Tower:" in the blow he did not risk his life; "being, in truth, rather a cut than a stab" in his breast. Mortified passion may have overcome for a moment the hero whose fortitude had often been more nobly tried; but, in my own mind, I cannot avoid including the present incident among those similar minor artifices designed for some grand effect.

Rawleigh, condemned, was suffered to live twelve years in the Tower; whence he obtained a release, but not a pardon:

* The secret history of this state-riddle, — the conspiracy of Cobham, a disappointed courtier, — as Mr. Lodge observes, might fill a moderate volume of speculations on its darker parts. All historians agree that it must remain insolvable and "hopelessly obscure." It is, however, opened with great vigor, and novelty of research, by Mr. TYTLER, in the Appendix to his biography of Rawleigh. But he passes over too slightly the conversation and the offer of the "eight thousand crowns;" and "the pension," of which Rawleigh said "he would tell him more when he saw the money." It is quite evident that Rawleigh had been tampered with by the silly Cobham, whose rickety brains had been concocting a crude, fantastic plot, which was hardly the initial of one. But Rawleigh had listened: he had not positively refused his participation, neither had he yielded his consent. When "the eight thousand crowns" had safely arrived, where were they to go? Rawleigh declared, that, "when he saw the money, he would be ready to talk more on the subject." Mr. Tytler, like Sir Walter, is pleased to consider that the whole affair was "one of Lord Cobham's idle conceits."

the condemnation was suspended over his head like the pointed sword, ready to drop on the guest invited to the mockery of a festival. A new secretary, Winwood, and a new favorite, Buckingham, had listened to the vision of a gold mine and an English colony. The sage, who had passed through that school of wisdom, his own "History of the World," when called into action, was still the same romantic adventurer. What else for him remained in England but the dream of his early days? The military and the naval writings, as well as the "History of the World," of Rawleigh, had been designed by their great author to mould the genius of that prince to whom he looked for another Elizabethan reign; but Prince Henry had sunk into an untimely grave, and the sovereign who loved as much as any one an awful volume was deterred from valuing the man.

Rawleigh gathered together all the wrecks of his battered fortune, and, with a company of adventurers, equipped the fleet which was hastening to found a new empire. Ere its sails were filled with propitious gales, its ruin was prepared. The secret plans of its great conductor, confided to our government, by their order were betrayed to the jealous council of Castile. Lying in sickness, Rawleigh lands on a hostile coast: his son, with filial emulation, combated and fell; his confidential Keymis, whose life was devoted to him, could not endure reproach, and, closing his cabin-door, ended his days; and, if he himself bore up with life, it was that his life was still due to many. "I could die heart-broken, as Drake and Hawkins had died before, when they failed in their enterprise. My brains are broken, and I cannot write much: I live, and I told you why." But he knew his life was a pledge no longer redeemable. His "rabble of idle rascals" mutinied, till the hope of falling in with the Spanish treasure-fleet lured them homewards. The letters to his wife are among the most tragical communications of a great mind greatly despairing, and may still draw tears.

On Rawleigh's return, a proclamation was issued for his arrest; and he surrendered to his near kinsman, Sir Lewis Stukeley, Vice-Admiral of Devon. On their journey to London, they were joined by Manoury, a French physician, not unskilled in chemistry, a favorite study with Rawleigh.

It was in this journey that Rawleigh contrived one of those humiliating stratagems which we have several times noted with astonishment. In a confidential intercourse with the French chemist, he procured drugs by which he was enabled to counterfeit a strange malady. Alas! the great man was himself cozened. Manoury was the most guileful of *Moutons;* and his near kinsman, Stukeley, the most infamous of traitors!*

The conflict of opposite emotions which induced this folly who shall describe? Rawleigh died in the elevation of his magnanimous spirit, as truly great when he took his farewell of his world as when he closed the last sublime page of his great volume. He knew his fate, and he had come to meet it. The moment was disastrous: the Spanish match lay in one scale, and the head of Rawleigh was put in the other by the implacable Spaniard; and, when a state-victim is required, the political balance is rarely regulated by simple justice.

An eminent critic has pronounced, that "the 'History of the World,' by Rawleigh, is rather an historical dissertation than a work rising to the majesty of history."

It sometimes happens that the application of an abstract principle of the critical art to some particular work may tend to injure the writer, without conveying any information to the reader; for thus the rare qualities of originality are wholly passed by, should the masterly genius have composed in a manner unprescribed by any canon of criticism.

* This incident in the life of Rawleigh is told in the "Curiosities of Literature," vol. iii. I have been enabled to give the secret history of this Sir Lewis Stukeley, who having first despoiled, then betrayed, his great kinsman. That history offers one of the most striking instances of moral retribution.

Our author was not ignorant of the laws of historical composition, which, he observes, "many had taught, but no man better, and with greater brevity, than that excellent learned gentleman, Sir FRANCIS BACON."

The ardent and capricious genius of our author projected a universal history which was to occupy three mighty folios, at a time when our language had not yet produced a single historical work: he had no model to look up to; nor, had there been, was he disposed to be casting in other men's moulds. The design and the execution were a creation of his own. Masses of the most curious parts of learning were to be drawn out of recondite tomes, from the Rabbins, the Fathers, the historians, and the poets of every nation; all that the generations of men have thought, and whatever they have memorably acted. But, in this voluminous scroll of time, something was to enter of not less price, — what his own searching spirit thought, what his diligence had collected, and, farther, what his own eyes had observed in the old and the new worlds. TRUTH and EXPERIENCE were to be the columns which supported and adorned HISTORY; and this we read in "the MIND of the Frontispiece," — one of those emblematical representations of "the mind" of the author, which the engravers of that day usually rendered less pictorial than perplexing.*

A universal genius was best able to compose a universal history: statesman, soldier, and sage, in writing the "History of the World," how often has Rawleigh become his own historiographer! He had been a pilgrim in many characters, and his philosophy had been exercised in very opposite spheres of human existence. A great commander by land and by sea, he was critical in all the arts of stratography, and delights to illustrate them on every occasion. The danger of

* The explanatory stanzas prefixed to this "Mind," though unsubscribed by the name of the writer, were composed by Jonson; for they appear in his works.

having two generals for one army is exemplified by what he himself had witnessed at Jarnac: in a narrative of Carthage, when the Romans lost their fleet, he points out the advantages of a flying navy, from what had occurred under his own eye in the wars of the Netherlands and of Portugal; and concludes that "it is more difficult to defend a coast than to invade it." In the midst of a narrative of the siege of a town of Carthage, when the besieged rushed out of the town eager to learn the terms of the capitulation before they were concluded, the Roman general seized on this advantage by entering with his army, without concluding the capitulation. "A similar incident happened, when I was a young man in France, of Marshal Monluc, while a parley was held about the surrender; but noble men held this conduct as not honorable." Foreign mercenaries, he observes, are not to be relied on; for, at the greatest extremity, they have not only refused to fight, but have passed over to the enemy; or they have become the masters of those who hired them, as the Turks were called in by the Greeks, and the Saxons by the Britons. And here he distinguishes the soldiery consisting of English, French, and Scotch, which established the independence of the Netherlands: in this case, these mercenaries were bound together by one common interest with the people who had required their aid; therefore these stood in the condition of allies, as well as of foreigners solely retained by pay.

His digressions are never more agreeable than when they become dissertations: the most ordinary events of history assumed a new face by the noble speculations which he builds on them, full of a searching, critical spirit, of sound morality, and of practicable policy; often profound, always eloquent. One on the Mosaic code as a precedent for the laws of other nations would have delighted Montesquieu. On the inviolability of oaths, he admirably describes them as "the chains by which freemen are tied to the world." On slavery, on idolatry, on giving the lie, on the point of honor, on the

origin of local names of America by their first discoverers, — such topics abound in his versatile pages. Even curious matters engaged his attention, and in the new world he inspected Nature with the close eye of a naturalist;* nor has he disdained, at times, a pleasant tale. There are few pages of this venerable but genial volume where we do not find that it is Rawleigh who speaks or who acts, making legible his secret thoughts, charming the story of four thousand years with the pleasures of his own memory.

The actual condition of society; the politics of past governments; the arts, the trades, the inventions of past ages, matters deeply interesting in the history of man, often forgotten, and hardly recoverable, — judged by that large mind which had so boldly planned the "History of the World," cannot properly be censured as "digressions." "True it is," he adds, "that I have also made many others, which, if they shall be laid to my charge, I must cast the fault into the great heap of human error. For, seeing we digress in all the ways of our lives; yea, seeing the life of man is nothing else but digression, — it may the better be excused in writing of their lives and actions. *I am not altogether ignorant in the laws of history and of the kinds.*"

It is evident that our author was conscious that he had struck into a virgin vein; and, however amenable to the code of historical composition, very gracefully apologizes for indulging the novelty. The novelty, indeed, was so little comprehended by those gross feeders on the carrion of time, who can discover nothing in history but its disjointed and naked facts, that, rejecting every "digression" as interrupting the chro-

* Rawleigh notices a singular instinct in the birds in these new regions, which built their nests on the twigs of trees, pendent over the waters, rather than in the branches, to save their young from the attacks of the monkeys. In such relations he is full and particular. He corrects the marvellous accounts of the *Ficus indica*, — the banian, or sacred tree of the Brahmins: we nowhere find such a lively picture of that singular curiosity of Nature, the self-planting tree, here minutely described.

nology, they put forth their abridgments: and Alexander Ross rejoiced to call his "the Marrow of History;" but probably found, to his dismay, that he had only collected the dry bones; and that, in all this "History of the World," nothing was more veritable than the author's own emotions. All which these matter-of-fact retailers had so carefully omitted, we now class by a title which such writers rarely recognize as the philosophy of history. Great writers admit of no abridgment. If you do not follow the writer through all the ramifications of his ideas, and imbue your mind with the fulness of the author's mind, you can receive only interrupted impressions, and retain but an imperfect and mutilated image of his genius. The happiest of abridgments is the author's own skill in composition: to say all that is necessary, and to omit all that is superfluous, — this is the secret of abridgment; and there is no other of a great original work.

"The History of the World" appeared as a literary phenomenon, even to the philosophical Hume. He expresses his astonishment at "the extensive genius of the man, who, being educated amid naval and military enterprises, had *surpassed in the pursuits of literature even those of the most recluse and sedentary lives.*"

This is much from him who has taught us not to wonder, but to inquire. Rawleigh, however, had dropped some hints on his Hebraic studies: acknowledging his ignorance of that recondite language, he was indebted to some preceding interpreters and to "some learned friends;" and he adds with good humor, but with a solemn feeling, "Yet it were not to be wondered at, had I been beholding to neither; having had *eleven years' leisure* to obtain the knowledge of that or any other language." It did not occur to our historian, that "eleven years" of uninterrupted leisure yields a full amount of "the most recluse and sedentary life." With a universal mind, Rawleigh was eager after universal knowledge; and we have positive and collateral evidence, that he sought in his learned circle

whatever aid the peculiar studies of each individual could afford him.

A circumstance as remarkable as the work itself occurred in the author's long imprisonment. By one of those strange coincidences in human affairs, it happened, that, in the Tower, Rawleigh was surrounded by the highest literary and scientific circle in the nation. Henry, the ninth Earl of Northumberland, on the suspicion of having favored his relative Piercy, the gunpowder-plot conspirator, was cast into this state-prison, and confined during many years. This earl delighted in what Anthony Wood describes as "the obscure parts of learning." He was a magnificent Mecænas, and not only pensioned scientific men, but daily assembled them at his table; and in this intellectual communion, participating in their pursuits, he passed his life. His learned society were designated as "the Atlantes of the mathematical world;" but that world had other inhabitants, — antiquaries and astrologers, chemists and naturalists. There was seen Thomas Allen, another Roger Bacon, "terrible to the vulgar," famed for his "Bibliotheca Alleniana," a rich collection of manuscripts, most of which have been preserved in the Bodleian: the name of Allen survives in the ardent commemorations of Camden, of Spelman, and of Selden. He was accompanied by his friend Dr. Dee; but whether Dee ever tried their patience or their wonder by his "Diary of Conferences with Spirits," we find no record: and by the astronomical Torporley, a disciple of Lucretius, for his philosophy consisted of atoms; several of his manuscripts remain in Sion College. The muster-roll is too long to run over. In this galaxy of the learned, the brightest star was Thomas Hariot, who merited the distinction of being "the universal philosopher:" his inventions in algebra, Descartes, when in England, silently adopted, but which Dr. Wallis afterwards indignantly reclaimed; his skill in interpreting the text of Homer excited the grateful admiration of Chapman, when occupied by his version. Bishop Corbet has described —

"Deep Hariot's mine,
In which there is no dross."

Two others were Walter Warner, who is said to have suggested to Harvey the great discovery of the circulation of the blood; and Robert Hues, famed for his "Treatise on the Globes." These, with Hariot, were the earl's constant companions; and, at a period when science seemed connected with necromancy, the world distinguished the earl and his three friends as "Henry the Wizard, and his three Magi." We may regret that no Symposia have come down to us from this learned society in the Tower, which we may consider as the first philosophical society in our country. All these persons, eminent in their day, appear to have written in their various departments, and were inventors in science; yet few of their works have passed through the press. This circumstance is a curious evidence in our literary history, that, in that day, the studious composed their works without any view to their publicity: the difficulty of obtaining a publisher for any work of science might also have conduced to confine their discoveries to their private circle. Some of these learned men, probably, were uncouth writers: Dee never could end a sentence in his rambling, confused style. Many of these works, scattered in their forlorn state of manuscript, often fell into hands who appropriated them to their own purpose. Even Hariot's treatise, which furnished Descartes with a new idea of the science, was a posthumous publication by his friend Warner, merely to secure a continuance of the pension which had been granted to him by the Earl of Northumberland.

These philosophers appear to have advanced far into their inquiries; for they were branded by atheism or deism. What, therefore, has reached us coming from ignorant or prejudiced reporters, will not satisfy our curiosity. Of Hariot, Wood tells that "he always undervalued the old story of the creation of the world, and could never believe the trite position, *ex nihilo nihil fit.* He made a *philosophical theology*, wherein

he cast off the Old Testament; so that, consequently, the New would have no foundation. He was a deist, and his doctrine he did impart to the Earl of Northumberland and to Sir Walter Rawleigh, when he was compiling his 'History of the World.' He would controvert the matter with eminent divines; who therefore, having no good opinion of him, did look on the matter of his death as a judgment for nullifying the Scriptures." Hariot died of a cancer on his lip.

From such accounts we can derive no knowledge of the *philosophical theology* of Hariot. He was the philosopher, however, who went to Virginia with the design of establishing a people of peace, with the Bible in his hand. He taught those children of Nature its pure doctrines, till they began to idolize the book itself, embracing it, kneeling to it, and rubbing their bodies with it. This new Manco Capac checked this innocent idolatry, but probably found some difficulty in making them rightly comprehend that the Bible was but a book like any other, made by many hands; but that the spiritual doctrine contained in it was a thing not to be touched nor seen, but to be obeyed. Such a philosopher, could he have remained among these Indians, would have become the great legislator of a tribe of primitive Christians; and, as he actually contrived to construct an alphabet for them, this seems to have been his intention.

The doctrines of Hariot, which Wood has reprobated, certainly were not infused into the pages of Rawleigh: his divinity is never sceptical; his researches only lead to speculations purely ethical and political, — what men have done, and what men do.*

* The authors of the "General Dictionary" censure Wood for his unauthenticated assertions; and they infer, that, as he was thus evidently erroneous in his notion of Rawleigh's history, he may have been equally so in his idea of the philosophical theology of Hariot. Wood, however, could have alleged his authority, though a very indifferent one. We have recently discovered that Wood here was only transcribing the crude hearsays of his friend Aubrey; and, in these matters, the Oxford antiquary, and the

Such were the men of science, daily guests in the Tower during the imprisonment of Rawleigh; and, when he had constructed his laboratory to pursue his chemical experiments, he must have multiplied their wonders. With one he had been intimately connected early in life: Hariot had been his mathematical tutor, was domesticated in his house, and became his confidential agent in the expedition to Virginia. Rawleigh had earnestly recommended his friend to the Earl of Northumberland; and Sion House, in consequence, became for Hariot a home and an observatory.

The scholastic Dr. Burhill is supposed to have been one among the learned friends whose assistance in his Hebraic researches Rawleigh acknowledges. It was such a student that might have led Rawleigh into his singular discussion on the site of paradise. One great name has claimed the tracings of his hand in the "History of the World." Ben Jonson has positively told that he wrote a piece on the Punic wars, which Rawleigh "altered, and set in his book." The verses prefixed to the "Mind of the Frontispiece" are Jonson's. There was an intimacy between Jonson and Rawleigh which appears to have been interrupted; and this may possibly have given occasion to the remarkable sharp stricture from Jonson, in his conversation with Drummond, that "Rawleigh esteemed more fame than conscience: the best wits in England were employed in making his 'History of the World.'"

Rawleigh, in his vast and recondite collection of criticism and chronology, would enrich his volume with the stores accumulated from the sources of brother-minds: it is even said that he submitted his composition to Serjeant Hoskyns, that universal Aristarchus of that day, at whose feet, to use the style of honest Anthony, all poets threw their verses;* but

"magotie-headed" gossiper, as Wood afterwards found him to be, were equally intelligent.

* Hoskyns wrote many poems. A manuscript volume of his poems, fairly written, we may presume, for the press, and "bigger than all Donne's

the most material characteristic of his work Rawleigh could borrow from no one, — the tone and elevation of his genius.

But, if the "History of the World" instructed his contemporaries, there was a greater history in his mind, which had secured the universal acceptance of posterity, — the history of his own times. But the age of Elizabeth, in manuscript, might be an act of treason in the court of James the First, in the eyes of his redoubted rival, Cecil: he who did not wholly escape from malicious applications in writing the history of the world that had passed away, eluded the fatal struggle with contemporary passions. He has himself acquainted us of this loss to our domestic political history: "It will be said by many that I might have been more pleasing to the reader if I had written the story of mine own times, having been permitted to draw water as near the well-head as another. To this I answer, that whosoever in writing a modern history shall follow truth too near the heels, it may haply strike out his teeth. There is no mistress or guide that hath led her followers and servants into greater miseries. He that goeth after her too far off, loseth her sight, and loseth himself; and he that walks after her at a middle distance, I know not whether I should call that kind of course temper or baseness." *

The miscellaneous writings of Rawleigh are so numerous

works," was "lent by his son Sir Benedict," A. Wood tells us, "who was a man that ran with the usurping Parliament, to a certain person, in 1653; but he could never retrieve it." We are left in the dark to know whether we have lost a great poet, or only a loyalist; whether the "certain person" was a parliamentary *enragé*, or only utterly reckless of a collection of poems "bigger than Dr. Donne's"! One poem of this great critic has come down to us, of which there is more than one manuscript in the Museum, and one in the Ashmolean, — "A Vision," addressed to the king during his confinement, in which he introduces his mother and his wife and his child. By the frequency of these copies, we find how much temporary passion gave an interest to very indifferent writings. It is printed by Dr. Bliss in the "Athenæ Oxonienses."

* Preface to the "History of the World."

and so various, that Oldys has classed them under the heads, poetical, epistolary, military, maritime, geographical, political, philosophical, and historical.*

Of a character so exalted and a genius so varied, how has it happened that Gibbon, who had once intended to compose the wondrous tale of his life, has pronounced his character to be "ambiguous," and that Hume has described it as "a great but ill-regulated mind"? †

The story of Rawleigh is a moral phenomenon; but what is there that moves in the sphere of humanity, of which, when we discover the principle of action, we cannot calculate even the most eccentric movements? Rawleigh from the first was to be the architect of his own fortunes: this was a calamity with him; for a perpetual impulse was communicated to the versatility and the boundless capacity of a genius which seemed universal. Soldier and sailor, sage and statesman, he could not escape from the common fate of becoming the

* The name of Rawleigh proved too attractive for the booksellers to escape their grasp: they have forged his name on various occasions; and they have done worse, for they have unquestionably adulterated his genuine works by admitting writings which he never could have written. Rawleigh composed some "Instructions to his Son and to Posterity." The publisher of his "Remains" probably considered that "the Dutiful Advice of a Loving Son to his Aged Father" must be equally acceptable. Sir Walter had no aged father to address; and, if he had, he would not have written such a mean piece of puritanic insolence. I suspect that "the Advice" was nothing but a parody on "the Instructions" by some very witless scribbler.

† Hume was bitterly attacked in the "Biographia Britannica" by a Dr. Philip Nicoll, one of the writers calling himself one of the proprietors, for his account of the conduct of Rawleigh, — art. "Ralegh," note (cc). The spirit of nationality was rife in 1760, when we find that a cruel apology is inflicted on Hume as "a foreigner! for this writer may be allowed the privilege of that plea, as being born and bred, and constantly living, among a people, and under a constitution, of a very different nature, genius, and temper from the English"! I cannot believe that Hume, to remove the odium of Rawleigh's death from the Scottish monarch, purposely depreciated the hero; but probably looking hastily into the account of Guiana, stuffed with the monstrous tales of a lying Spaniard, and considering the whole to be a gross artifice of the great navigator for an interested purpose, he gave way to his impressions.

creature of circumstance. What vicissitudes! what moral revelations! How he disdained his enviers! His towering ambition paused not in its altitude: he reached its apex; and, having accomplished every thing, he missed all! He whose life is a life of adventure, who is now the daring child of fortune, and falls to be the miserable heir of misfortune, though glory sometimes disguises his recklessness, is doomed to be often humiliated as well as haughty.

The favorite of his sovereign, thrown amid the contending suitors of a female court, we have found creeping in crooked politics, and intriguing in dark labyrinths. Rawleigh met his evil genius in Cecil: he saw his solitary hope vanish with Prince Henry. Awakening his last energies with the juvenile passion of his early days, he pledged his life on a new adventure: it was his destiny to ascend the scaffold. He was always to be a victim of state. The day of his trial and the hour of his death told to his country whom they had lost. From the most unpopular man in England, he became the object of the public sympathy; for they saw the permanent grandeur of the character, when its lustre was no longer dusked by cloudy interests or temporary passions.

There is no object in human pursuits which the genius of Rawleigh did not embrace. What science was that unwearying mind not busied in? What arts of hoar antiquity did he not love to seek? What sense of the beautiful ever passed transiently over his spirit? His books and his pictures ever accompanied him in his voyages. Even in the short hour before his last morning, is he not still before us, while his midnight pen traces his mortuary verse, perpetuating the emotions of the sage, and of the hero who could not fear death?*

* The Dean of Westminster was astonished at Rawleigh's cheerfulness on the day of his execution, who "made no more of his death than if he had been to take a journey." The divine was fearful that this contempt of death might arise from "a senselessness of his own state;" but the hero satisfied

Such is the psychological history of a genius of the first order of minds, whom posterity hails among the founders of our literature.

the dean that he died "very Christianly." Yet the gossip of Aubrey tells, that "his cousin Whitney said, and I think it is printed, that he spake not one word of Christ, but of the great and incomprehensible God with much zeal and adoration, so that he concluded he was an a-Christ, not an a-theist." In this manner, great men were then judged whenever they "ventured at discourse which was unpleasant to the churchmen," as this confused recorder of curious matters has sent down to us. This indicates that Socinian principles were appearing.

THE OCCULT PHILOSOPHER, DR. DEE.

At the dawn of philosophy, its dreams were not yet dispersed, and philosophers were often in peril of being as imaginative as poets. The arid abstractions of the schoolmen were succeeded by the fanciful visions of the occult philosophers; and both were but preludes to the experimental philosophy of Bacon and Newton, and the metaphysics of Locke. The first illegitimate progeny of science were deemed occult, and even magical: while astronomy was bewildered with astrology, chemistry was running into alchemy, and natural philosophy wantoned in the grotesque chimeras of magical phantoms, the philosophers themselves pursued science in a suspicious secrecy, and were often imagined to know much more than the human faculties can acquire. These anagogical children of revery, straying beyond "the visible diurnal sphere," elevated above humanity, found no boundary which they did not pass beyond, no profundity which they did not fathom, no altitude on which they did not rest. The credulity of enthusiasts was kept alive by the devices of artful deceivers, and illusion closed in imposture.

Shakespeare, in the person of Prospero, has exhibited the prevalent notions of the judicial astrologer combined with the adept, whose white magic, as distinguished from the black or demon magic, holds an intercourse with purer spirits. Such a sage was —

> "Transported,
> And rapt in secret studies;"

that is, in the occult sciences; and he had —

"Volumes that he prized more than his dukedom."

These were alchemical, astrological, and cabalistical treatises. The magical part of "the Tempest," Warton has observed, "is founded on that sort of philosophy which was peculiar to JOHN DEE and his associates, and has been called 'the Rosicrucian.'"

Dr. DEE was a Theurgist, a sort of magician, who imagined that they held communication with angelic spirits, of which he has left us a memorable evidence. His personal history may serve as a canvas for the picture of an occult philosopher, — his reveries, his ambition, and his calamity.

Dee was an eminent and singular person, more intimately connected with the patronage of Elizabeth than perhaps has been observed. It was the fate of this scholar to live in the reigns of five of our successive sovereigns, each of whom had some influence on his fortunes. His father, in the household of Henry the Eighth, suffered some "hard-dealing" from this imperious monarch injurious to the inheritance of the son; the harshness of the sire was considered by the royal children, for Edward granted a pension; Mary, in the day of trial, was favorably disposed towards the philosopher; and Elizabeth, a queen well known for her penurious dispensations, at all times promptly supplied the wants of her careless and dreamy sage.

That decision of character which awaits not for any occasion to reveal itself broke forth in his college-days. His skill in mathematics, and his astronomical observations, had attracted general notice; and, in his twentieth year, Dee ventured on the novel enterprise of conferring personally with the learned of the Netherlands. In the reign of Henry the Eighth, little experimental knowledge was to be gathered out of books. Like the ancient, our insular philosophers early travelled to discover those novelties in science which were

often limited to the private circle: there were no Royal or Antiquarian Societies, no "Transactions" of science or the arts. Robert Fludd, the great Rosicrucian, who became more famous than Dee in occult studies, before he gave the world his elaborate labors, passed six years in his travels in France, Germany, and Italy.

Our youthful sage, on his return to his college, presented them with several curious instruments of science, which were not then always procurable in the shops of mechanics. Philosophers often made as well as invented their implements. The learned Mercator was renowned for his globes; and mathematical instruments, of a novel construction, were the invention of the scientific Frisias.

Our young philosopher, already suspected of a dangerous intimacy with the astral influences, did not quiet the murmurs by his improved dexterity in mechanics. In the elation of youth, he astounded the marvelling fellows of his college. Dee has himself confessed that "his boyish attempts and exploits scholastical may not be meet to repeat." In a lecture, Dee executed a piece of mechanical invention which now would have been pantomimical, but was then necromantic. When a greater magician, Roger Bacon, by his art, had made the apparition of a man to walk from the top of All-Hallows steeple in Oxford to the top of St. Mary's, this optical illusion had endangered his life; and another great occult philosopher set forth a compassionate apology for the science of optics, but could only allege it was not magical, though it seemed so. Two centuries and a half had not sufficed to enlighten the fellows of a college at Oxford.

Dee has suffered hard measure from those who have only judged of him in the last days of his unprotected distress. In his age, if we except mathematics, there were few demonstrable truths in science, disguised as it was by rank fables and airy hypotheses: Nature was not interpreted so often as she was misunderstood. The ideal world seemed hardly more

illusive than the material. While his sovereign and the nation and foreigners were looking up to the solitary sage, may we not pardon the honest egotism which once declared, that, if he had found a Mæcenas, Britain would not have been destitute of an Aristotle? Bacon had not yet appeared; and, however we may deem of his aspiration, we cannot censure his judgment in discovering there was yet a vacant seat for him who was worthy to fill it.

Dee was an eminent mathematician; but the early bent of his mind was somewhat fanciful: an inextinguishable ambition to fix the admiration of the world worked on a restless temperament and a long vagrant course of life; and his generous impulses burst into the wild exuberances of the reveries of astrology, alchemy, and the cabala.

The restlessness of a mind ever escaping from the bounded present to the indefinite future directed his flight to the University of Louvain: there he attracted a noble crowd from the court of Brussels, whom he charmed like a new oracle of science. Then he rambled to Paris, to lecture on his favorite Euclid, explaining the elements not only mathematically, but by their application to natural philosophy, like another Pythagoras. A professorship was offered him on any terms; and the curious may still decide on his skill by a remarkable English preface, which Dee furnished to the translation of Euclid by Sir Henry Billingsley. Admiration seemed more real to Dee when he attracted it on different spots. Preceded by his reputation, with a name which had received the baptism of fame, he returned homewards, where he had potent friends in Sir John Cheke and in Cecil, and others who had been his auditors or his pupils; and he was pensioned by the youthful Edward.

In the jealous reign of Mary, he gave umbrage by a correspondence with the confidential servants of the Princess Elizabeth; and Dee had now grown into such repute for his occult sciences, that there was little difficulty in accusing him of

practising against the queen by enchantments. Cast into prison, the magician witnessed his "bedfellow," a meek religious man, dragged to the flames; an incident which long after he could not remember without horror. The spirit of the sovereign fails not to betray itself in each succeeding reign. Mary bound men to the stake; Elizabeth sent them forth into new seas and new lands; and the pacific James, turning them into babbling polemics, only shed much human ink. The inquisitors unexpectedly detected no act of treason; but, as possibly he might stand in peril of heresy, they recommended that he should be placed under the surveillance of Bishop Bonner, which probably was a royal protection. It is evident that Mary was as favorably disposed towards the philosopher as were her brother and her sister; and the literary memorial Dee addressed to the queen showed that he had no leisure to become an heresiarch.

Dee proposed "the recovery and preservation of ancient writers and monuments." These had been lamentably dispersed and wasted by the spoilers of the dissolved monasteries. The moment was favorable for the acquisition, not only by obtaining manuscripts, but by procuring transcripts of all which their possessors would not part with. In this memorial, Dee has recorded that Cicero's treatise "De Republica" perished at Canterbury, and it was the single copy which authenticated its existence. With such a collection, he proposed to erect "a library royal," — a future Vatican, or a British Museum! A noble design, when as yet no national institution for general learning existed. This glorious opportunity was lost! Governments rarely comprehend those prescient minds which anticipate wants posterity cannot always supply.

The early intercourse of the Princess Elizabeth with our philosopher suffered no interruption, as we shall have occasion to show, during her protracted reign, notwithstanding the ill fame of his awful skill in the occult sciences. We must throw ourselves into his times to judge of the calamity of

this celebrity. This and the succeeding age were troubled by the faith of omens, meteors, and of "day-fatality," combined with the astral influences, malignant witchcraft, and horrible magic. It was only at the close of the seventeenth century, in 1682, that Bayle ventured anonymously, in his "Thoughts on Comets," cautiously to demonstrate that these fugitive bodies in the heavens had no influence whatever over the cabinets of princes! Our own historian, Arthur Wilson, in describing "a blazing star," opined that it was not sent as "a flambeau," to usher in the funeral of the simple queen of James the First: the Puritan had no notion that heaven would compliment royalty; but he was not the less alarmed for the Protestant interest, as it concerned "the war then breaking out in Bohemia;" and so difficult was it to decide between the two opinions, that Rushworth, who wrote long afterwards, very carefully chronicles both. Such was the philosophy of the Elizabethan age, and truly much later, in France as well as in England.

It was, therefore, in the spirit of the age that the minister of Elizabeth held a formal conference with Dr. Dee, to fix on a fortunate day for the coronation, and which the sage opened to them on "the principles of the most ancient astrologers;" and the Privy Council punctually placed the crown on the head of the Queen of England. Nor was this the only occult lore for which his protection of the queen's safety was earnestly sought. Dee one morning was hastily summoned to prevent a sudden mischief impending over her majesty's person. A great puppet of wax, representing the queen, was discovered lying in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, with a huge pin stuck through its breast. Dee undertook to quiet "Her Majesty and the Lords of the Honorable Privy Council" within a few hours; but first insisted, that, in the solemn disenchantment, Mr. Secretary Wilson should stand beside him to witness that Dee only used "godly means." It is not in our histories of England that we learn the real occasion of the

coronation-day of Elizabeth, nor of the panic of "the Privy Council" on the incident in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields; yet such domestic annals of a people enter into the national character, and have sometimes strangely influenced it.*

Though Dee was imbued with the occult sciences of his age, he ardently cultivated arts and literature which would have honored him in the present. He had formed a great library, rich in Irish and Welsh and other ancient manuscripts, which probably no other person then possessed;† an observatory where he watched, to read in the volume of the heavens; a laboratory of chemistry where the furnace rarely ceased; and a collection of philosophical instruments, too many of which were deemed magical. All these attested his energetic pursuits, to the manifold injury of a very moderate fortune, and the carelessness of a life of abstraction and revery.

But his ambition had accomplished its proud object; and, on all public events wherein science was concerned, recourse was had to the sage of Mortlake. Camden refers to Dr. Dee's astronomical observations of a new star which had gradually vanished, though the celestial apparition had spread great fears and doubts; but our philosopher entertained the queen the length of three days with the phenomenon. A more important labor was his reformation of the Gregorian

* About the same time, in 1574, Ruggeiri, a Florentine, was condemned to the galleys for having conspired against the French monarch in favor of the Duke of Alençon, his brother. The act of treason consisted in making an image of wax, the perfect likeness of Charles the Ninth, which had a heart pricked with pins. This was the exact peril into which our English queen had been cast, — probably by some Romanist, who fancied himself, or herself, to be an adept.

† A catalogue of Dr. Dee's library, in his own handwriting, may be found in Harl. MSS., 1879, — four thousand volumes, "abounding with a curious harvest of books illustrative of the occult art," but also containing the ancient classics. He expended on his collections the considerable sum of "thirty hundred pounds," as he tells us; for at that day they counted by "hundreds."

Calendar, which even later mathematicians have deemed correct. The versatility of the pursuits of this scientific man was as remarkable as their ingenuity. In that reign of maritime enterprise, many of our adventurers had taken nominal possession of many new countries, and the queen had expressed a wish to learn their sites. One day, in her garden at Richmond, Dee unrolled to the royal eye a spacious scroll, hydrographical, geographical, and historical, where the rivers were tracked, and the coasts indented, and the authorities of the records inscribed on its page, by which the sovereign founded her title to dominions of which she had not always heard the names.* The genius of Dee was as erratic as the course of life he shortly fell into; but it kept great objects in view; and as he projected a national library under Mary, when literature itself seemed lost, under Elizabeth, when "this incomparable islandish monarchy" was menaced by the foreigner, he investigated "the art of navigation," and proposed "the perpetual guard and service of a petty navy royal, continually to be maintained without the queen's charges or any unpleasant burdens to the Commons." Our inventor was anticipating our future national greatness; and such minds are only comprehended when they can no longer receive our gratitude.

Our author published eight or ten learned works, and left unfinished fifty, some far advanced.†

* These ingenious rolls, or maps, are now deposited among the Cottonian Manuscripts.

† The curious catalogue of both is found in the "Biog. Britannica." Dee would have printed more of his writings; but he found the printers too often adverse to his hopes, as "few men's studies were in such matters employed." One of his manuscripts was so voluminous, containing an account of his "Inventions," being "greater than the English Bible," that it appeared "so dreadful to the printers," that our philosopher postponed its publication to "a sufficient opportunity," which never occurred.

These unfinished writings are scattered in the COTTONIAN and the ASHMOLEAN Collections; for their learned founders anxiously recovered them.

The naval project appears in a singular volume, entitled "General and Rare Memorials pertaining to the Perfect Art of Navigation, 1577, folio."

The imagination of Dee often predominated over his science: while both were mingling in his intellectual habits, each seemed to him to confirm the other. Prone to the mystical lore of what was termed the occult sciences (which in reality are no sciences at all, since whatever remains occult ceases to be science), Dee lost his better genius.

The mathematician whom the sage Burleigh had valued for his correction of the vulgar calendar must have amazed that statesman by a proposal to search for a mine for the royal service! claiming for his sole remuneration a letter-patent, granting him all *treasure-trove*, as, in the barbarous law-French, is termed all wealth hidden in the earth, which, no claimant appearing, becomes appropriated by the sovereign. The mysterious agency of the *virgula divina*, or the divining-rod, was to open the undiscovered mine, and to detect in its progress, for the use of the bearer, the unsunned gold or silver which some had been foolish enough to inter, and not extract, from the earth.*

The author printed only one hundred copies, which he distributed among confidential friends, patriotically refusing a considerable offer for a copy by a foreign power. This volume is said to be one of the scarcest books in the English language. A copy at the British Museum contains notes in the handwriting of Dee himself, fraught with his usual sorrows: his representation of his affairs is not luminous, and seems written with a dulled spirit, querulous and involved.

* The mystery of the divining-rod is as ancient as the days of Cicero. The German miners introduced its practice among our Cornish miners. Childrey, in his "Britannia Baconiana, or the Natural Rarities of England, Scotland, and Wales," 1661, cautiously describes, as a disciple of Bacon should, its effects on mines of lead in Somersetshire. Boyle and the Royal Society were perplexed by the evidence. We have accounts from some, unimpeachable for integrity, of the agitation of the divining-rod, as authentic and incomprehensible as any recorded of animal magnetism. A few years ago, a learned writer in the "Quarterly Review" surprised us by reviving the phenomenon, in the history of it, as performed by a lady of distinction, in the present day, searching for a spring of water.

Many frauds have succeeded by this pretended rod of divination. The reader may consult Le Brun's "Histoire Critique des Pratiques Superstitieuses" for "La Baguette;" but, above all, a philosophical article by the

The luminous genius who had illustrated the demonstrations of Euclid was penetrating into the arcane caverns of the cabalists; and, in a state of spiritual elevation, fell into many a dreamy trance. The soul of the mystic would have passed into the world of spiritual existences; but he was not yet blessed with theurgic faculties, and patiently awaited for the elect. If Dee had many reveries, he had also many disciples, both of rank and of name. Whatever a mind thus pre-occupied and predisposed earnestly seeks, it usually finds: its own infirm imagination aids the deception of the artful. The elect spirit, long expected, was at last found in the person of Edward Kelley, a young apothecary, but an adept in the secret sciences: his services were engaged at a moderate salary. Kelley had to make his fortune.

This KELLEY, — who afterwards became an English alchemist, renowned among the votaries of the hermetic art, and of whom many a golden legend is recorded, with which I dare not trust the reader, — it appears, once lost his ears at Lancaster for coining; the judges not perhaps distinguishing the

scientific BIOT, in "Biog. Universelle," art. *Ayman Jacques.* [An account of its use at Freiburg in discovering silver mines, and a picture of its form, may be seen in Dr. Brown's "Travels in Germany," 4to, 1677, p. 136.]

The divining-rod consists simply of a hazel-bough forked. The bearer firmly grasps the two pointed ends, holding it before him: it must bend, or become agitated, when it indicates the spot which conceals a spring of water or buried metal. In the hands of a susceptible agent, tremulous nerves, in the solemn operation, would be likely to communicate their irritability to the hazel-bough. But who has enjoyed the magic of the *treasure-trove*? The divining-rod, described as the Mosaical rod, furnishes an incident in "the Antiquary" of Sir Walter Scott, which was probably borrowed from an amusing incident in the Life of Lilly the astrologer; where we discover that David Ramsay, his majesty's clockmaker, having heard of a great treasure in the cloister of Westminster Abbey, came at midnight, accompanied by one of the elect, with the Mosaical rods: "on the west side of the cloister, the hazel-rods turned over another." David Ramsay had brought a great sack to hold the treasure; when suddenly all the demons issued out of their beds in a storm, that "we verily believed the west end of the church would have fallen." The torches were suddenly extinguished, the rods would not move, and they returned home faster than they came.

process by which the alchemist might have transmuted the baser into the precious metal. This neophyte, moreover, was a wizard, an aspirant in more supernatural arts, an incantator, a spirit-seer! Once with impious temerity he had ventured on questioning the dead! This "deed without a name" was actually perpetrated amid the powers of darkness, in the park of Walton-in-the-dale, in the county of Lancaster. A recent corpse was dragged forth from the churchyard: whether the erected spectre made any sign of resuscitation is not recorded, but it probably did; for it spoke! A voice was heard delivering its short but awful responses, sufficient for the evil curiosity of the guardian of a ward, eager to learn the doomsday of that frail mortal's existence.

For this tale our antiquary WEEVER has been quipped by our antiquary ANTHONY À WOOD for his excessive credulity; as if Anthony would infer that he himself was incredulous on all supernatural disclosures! The authority was, however, unquestionable; for it came from the agent himself in this dark work, the opener of the grave, the spectator of the grim vaticinator, the listener to the sepulchral voice. He had often related this violation of "God's acre" to many gentlemen in Lancashire, as well as to the faithful scribe of our "Ancient Funeral Monuments."

Many strange unexplained accounts have come down to us where *voices* have been introduced, and it has been too usual at once to suppose that the attestations were nothing more than what Butler deems "solid lying." Leibnitz, a philosopher who seems to have delighted in the wonderful, gives an account of a dog who spoke different languages; the evidence is undeniable: and certain it is that the docile animal at his master's bidding opened his mouth, and good French or Latin was distinctly heard. When the astrologer Lilly assures us of one of the magical crystal globes or mirrors from whence the spirits absolutely gave responses, he has described their

tones: "They speak, like the Irish, *much in the throat.*" "This, if it proves nothing else, will serve to show that the Irish was the primitive language," sarcastically observes Gifford; but his acumen might have discovered that "it proved" something else, and that Lilly here really delivered a plain truth in this description of the *voices* which gave the responses of the spirits.

The art of the ventriloquist to convey his voice to the place he wills — into the gaunt jaws of a dead man's skull, into the movable lips of a tutored dog, or into the invisible spirits of a magical globe — may be easily recognized. Ventriloquism has been oftener practised than has been known to the listeners. Speaking *much in the throat* identifies that factitious voice, which, drawing the air into the lungs, proceeds out of the thorax, and not from a lower region, as the ancient etymology indicated. The Pythonesses of the oracles exercised this faculty, and it was not less skilfully practised by Edward Kelley.

In the theurgic mysteries, Dee would not deviate from what he deemed "the most Christian courses:" fervent orisons and other devotional ceremonies were to hallow the cabalistical invocations,* and the astrological configurations and hieroglyphical cakes of wax, and other magical furniture. Among these was "a showstone," or an angelical mirror, placed on a pedestal.† By patient inspection at certain more blessed hours, the gifted seer could descry the apparitions of spirits moving within its cloudless orb; for at other times less propi-

* Sloane Manuscripts, 3191.

† There can be no doubt of the reality of all these magical apparatus, for we actually possess them. The magical mirror, having lost its theurgic enchantment, finally was placed among the curiosities of the late Earl of Orford. Lysons describes it as a round piece of volcanic glass finely polished: some one calls it Kennel coal. The hieroglyphical cakes of wax were deposited at the British Museum, probably at the time the precious manuscripts of Dee's conferences with "the spirits" were so carefully lodged in the Cottonian Collections.

tious the surface was indistinct, as if a misty curtain hung over it.*

By what natural progress of incidents the bold inventive genius of Kelley worked this fascination on the fatuity of the visionary, might be curious to develop; but he who himself probably had been a dupe was the better adapted to play the impostor. Strange as this incident may appear to us, it was not rare at that day. A communion with invisible spirits entered into the general creed throughout Europe, and crystal or beryl was the magical medium; but, as the gift of *seeing* what was invisible to every one else was reserved for the elect, it was this circumstance which soon led to impostures. Persons even of ordinary rank in life pretended to be what they termed *speculators*, and sometimes women were *speculatrices*. Often by confederacy, and always by a vivacious fancy, these jugglers poured out their several artful revelations. We now may inscribe as an historical fact in the voluminous annals of human folly, from which, however, we have hardly yet wholly escaped, imaginary beings, and incantation of spirits, and all spectral apparitions.

Kelley was now installed into the office of *skryer;* a term apparently of Dee's invention. Listening to the revelations of angelic spirits and to the mysterious secret, the alchemist inflamed the cabalistical faith of the visionary. It is certain that Dee now abandoned his mundane studies, and for many a year, through some thousands of pages, when Kelley was in the act of "skrying," sate beside "the showstone," the eager

* This superstition retains all its freshness in the East. A magician at Cairo recently,—

"Taking in of SHADOWS WITH A GLASS" ("the Alchemist" of Jonson), has, I believe, been recorded by a noble lord; having startled the lookers-on with one shadow, painfully recognized; and another of a great *bibliophile*, who, seen in the glass, walking in a garden with his hands full of books, was supposed to be the worthy Archdeacon Wrangham. I must, however, add, that the same magician showed himself very dull to a dear friend of mine; and that his "speculator," a boy called, apparently accidentally, from the street, only displayed his gift in nonsensical mendacity.

scribe of those imagined conferences with "the spirits," received, to use his own words, "through the eye and the ear of E. K." Kelley was a person of considerable fancy, which sometimes approached to a poetical imagination: the masquerade of his spiritual beings is remarkable for its fanciful minuteness. Voices were at times audible to Dee; but the terrific noises of supernatural agency which sometimes accompanied the visions could only have been heard by the poetical ear of Kelley, though assuredly they shook the doctor. I will give the reader a notion of one of these scenes.

E. K., looking into the showstone, said, "I see a garland of white rose-buds about the border of the stone: they be well opened, but not full out."

△. "The great mercies of God be upon us: we beseech him to increase our faith."

E. K. "Amen! But, while I consider these buds better, they seem rather to be white lilies."

△. "The eternal God wipe away our blackness, and make us purer and whiter than snow."

E. K. "They are seventy-two in number (angels), seeming with their heads *alternatim;* seeming with their heads one towards me, and one towards you. A voice cometh shouting out from the lilies, and all the lilies are become on fire. I hear a sound as though it were of many waters poured or streaming down in the clefts of great rocks and mountains. The noise is marvellous great: I hear it as afar off, and through the stone, or as it were of a thousand watermills going together."

A Voice. "*Est. Et quo modo est?*"

Another Voice. "*Male et in summo: et mensuratum est.*"

E. K. "I hear a great roaring, as if it were out of a cloud over one's head, not perfectly like thunder."

Another Voice. "*The seal is broken!*"

E. K. "Now I see beyond like a furnace-mouth as big as four or five gates of a city, as if it were a quarter of a mile off,

with a horrible smother of smoke coming out of it; and by it a great lake of pitch, and it bubbleth or simpereth as water doth when it beginneth to seethe. There standeth by the pit a white man in a white garment tucked up; his face is marvellous fair: this white spiritual creature saith, 'My lord, *ascend!*'"

E. K. "Now there cometh out a thing like a lion in the hinder parts, and his fore parts hath many heads of divers fashions upon one trunk; he hath like feathers on his neck; his heads are seven, three on one side, and three on another, and one in the middle, longer than the rest, lying backward to his tailward. The white man giveth him a bloody sword, and he taketh it in his fore-foot. The white man tieth this monster's fore-legs with a chain, that he cannot go but as one shackled. Now he giveth the monster a great hammer, with a seal at that end where the hammer striketh. The white man has cried with a loud cry, 'A horrible and terrible beast!' The white man taketh the hammer, and striketh him in the forehead of that head which is in the middle. Now all this vision is vanished away: the stone is clear."

On another occasion E. K. says, "I hear a marvellous noise, as of many mountains: which of the mouths do speak, I cannot discern. I hear a greater noise still: I never heard any such noise; it is as if half the world were rushing down a hill." *

* In the golden days of animal magnetism, more than forty years ago, I heard many tales, and visited many scenes, where there must have been much imposture practised, more credulity contagious, and much which I never could comprehend. In the magnetic sleep, where the body seemed extinct; and in the luminous crisis, where the soul was wakeful in all its invisible operations, — the inspired communicant, undisturbed by the sly contrivances of the unbeliever, seemed transported when and where they listed. A Mr. Baldwin, in 1795 our consul at Alexandria, in search of what he called the Divinity of Truth, imagined he had found it in this new and mystical science. Always seeking for fitting subjects, a cunning Arab long served his purpose on ordinary matters; but it was his fortune to fall on an Italian wanderer far more susceptible of the magnetic influence. For three years,

During two years, in which Dee deserted his studies and sacrificed his fortune, the name of Dee still remained so eminent, that learned foreigners in their visits to England continued their inquiries after him. A polish prince, Albert a'Laski, who was received with high honors at our court, applied to the Earl of Leicester for an introduction to the great English philosopher; and the earl appointed a day to dine with Dr. Dee. Then it was that our philosopher disclosed his mortifying condition, that he could no longer entertain his noble guests without selling his plate. The queen instantly sent him forty angels in gold. The illustrious Polander became a constant visitor; was initiated into the theurgic mysteries: there came a whisper from the unseen "spirits" that this palatine of Siradia might yet be the elected King of Poland! Ambitious princes are as credulous as ambitious philosophers. The predictors of a crown, with a royal exchequer from the alchemists, seduced the imagination; and a'Laski invited the sages with their families to reside at his castle.

There the Polish lord seems to have wearied of the angelic communications: he transferred them to the emperor, Rodolph the Second, at Prague. In all the courts of Europe, occult philosophers found a ready admittance.

Dee came auspiciously recommended to the emperor; for our author had formerly dedicated to the emperor's father, Maximilian, his cabalistical volume, which, when admitted to a private interview with Rodolph, the sage beheld lying

in his own abode, he has chronicled down "the sittings," as he calls them, where, in the magnetic sleep, the communicant poured forth, in verse and prose, mysteries and revelations. On his return to England, Mr. Baldwin printed by Bulmer, in an unpublished quarto, these "sittings," in the native language of the inspired: as the subject was an improvisator, it probably cost him little to charm Mr. Baldwin in "celestial colloquy sublime" with answers to most unanswerable inquiries, and descriptions of ecstatic scenes which made the pen tremble with wonder and delight in the hands of the infatuated scribe. Baldwin, with the faith of Dee, wrote down the revelations of *his* Edward Kelley.

open on the table.* The introduction of an author to an emperor by his own work may have something really magical in its effect, provided the spell is not disturbed by him who raised it. In an inflated oration, Dee announcing himself like a babbling missionary, as a messenger from angels, the emperor curtly observed that he did not understand Latin! The Pope's nuncio opportunely demanded that the two English necromancers should be questioned at Rome. Their flight relieved the emperor. A Bohemian count rejoiced to receive the fugitives at his Castle of Trebona, where strange alchemical projections of pewter flagons turned into silver, which the goldsmiths of Prague bought, are attested solemnly by Arthur Dee, the son of the doctor, to the philosophical Sir Thomas Browne. This must have been that day of elation which Dee entered in his diary: "Master Edward Kelley did open the great secret to me. God be thanked!" This Arthur Dee, indeed, remained an inveterate alchemist all his life; but the man who in his medical character was recommended by James the First to the Czar of Russia, and, after several years' residence at Moscow, on his return home was appointed physician to Charles the First, would be a reputable witness in any court of law.†

Dee and Kelley were abroad, living together, from 1583 to

* This volume is Dee's "Monas Hieroglyphica, Mathematice, Cabalistice, et Anagogice Explicata," 1564; a book which Elizabeth lamented she could not comprehend. It is reprinted in the "Theatrum Chymicum Britannicum" of that lover of the occult sciences, ELIAS ASHMOLE.

† The often-repeated tales of this vanished alchemy may startle the incredulous; but the dupes and the knaves have been so numerous, that we cannot distinguish between them. Sir Humphry Davy assured me that making gold might be no impossible thing, though, publicly divulged, a very useless discovery. Metals seem to be composite bodies, which Nature is perpetually preparing; and it may be reserved for the future researches in science to trace, and perhaps to imitate, some of these curious operations. Dr. Girtanner of Gottingen predicted, not many years ago, that, "in the nineteenth century, the transmutation of metals would be generally practised:" a set of kitchen utensils in gold, he assures us, would save us from the deathly oxides of copper, &c.

1589. Their adventures would form a romance; but I am not writing one. Their condition was mysterious, as were the incidents of their lives. Sometimes reduced to the most pitiable necessities for "meat and drink," at other times we find Dee travelling with a princely equipage, in three family coaches, a train of wagons, and an escort of fifty horsemen. These extraordinary personages long attracted the wonder of the Continent; but, whatever happened, their fortunes were variable. The pride of Dee was sensitive: there are querulous entries in his diary. There appeared some false play in his dangerous coadjutor. Kelley was dropping hints that he lived in a miserable state of delusion, — preludes to the great rupture! Mephistopheles menaced his victim. It is evident that Kelley determined to break up the profitless partnership, and set up for himself. The noise the parties raised in their quarrels on the Continent induced Elizabeth to command their return.* The alchemist did not return home with Dee. He obtained the patronage of the emperor, and was created a knight; but, as usually happened with great alchemists, Sir Edward Kelley was twice cast into prison. Sir Edward, however, continued his correspondence with Dee, and sent her majesty a timely information of some design against her person. This adventurer may appear a very suspicious personage. Lord Burleigh addresses this "Baron of Bohemia," as the minister designates him, with high respect and admiration for his "virtues, his wisdom, and learning." However, in the same confidential letter, his lordship informs "the good knight" of some malicious reports; that "he did not come home, because he could not perform that, indeed, which has been reported of him:" and others had gone so far as to deem Sir Edward "an impostor." This letter, written by Burleigh's

* Harl. Manuscripts, 6986 (26),—a letter from Dr. Dee to the queen, congratulating her on the defeat of the Armada. He declares that he is ready with Kelley, and their families, to return home. Dated November, 1588.

own hand,* shows the skilful falconer luring the bird. Dee assured the queen, that "the Baron of Bohemia" positively possessed the secret of the great operation. The queen anxiously concerted measures to secure the escape of Sir Edward Kelley from his second imprisonment. Agents were despatched, the jailers were drugged, the horses were awaiting for the fugitive: scaling the wall, he fell, and died of his contusions; thus abruptly closing the romance of a daring disturbed spirit.

Dee returned to England in December, 1589; and, presenting himself to the queen at Richmond, was received, as he was ever accustomed to be, with all graciousness. But the philosopher, after the absence of six years, returning to his studious abode, beheld it nearly dismantled: his chemical apparatus, with all his scientific implements, had been destroyed by a mob, and his library pillaged. Every day this victim of science experienced the effects of popular obloquy. He gathered up what fragments he could; and, again rapt in study, he again relapsed into his old wants. The *res angusta domi* once more disturbed his lares. Yet the queen was not unmindful of her philosopher: Mr. Cavendish was despatched to assure him that he might freely pursue his studies; and brought a royal Christmas gift of two hundred angels in gold, to be renewed with the season.

But the old man craved more than an uncertain eleemosynary bounty: his creditors multiplied, and the great will forget the man whom they rarely see. Dee has feelingly classed those who had outwearied his generous nature, "the ungrateful and the thankless, and the scorners and disdainers." The royal hand alone could repair his injuries, and vindicate his genius. Dee addressed a memorial to the queen, praying that a commission might be appointed to inquire into his case, which, as he energetically expressed himself, had

* This letter, from the Burleigh Papers, is printed by Strype. — *Annals*, iv. 3.

been "written with tears of blood." He did not draw up his petition as an illustrious pauper, but as a claimant for services performed.

A commission was immediately assigned, and it was followed by a literary scene of singular novelty.

Dee, sitting in his library, received the royal commissioners. Two tables were arranged: on one lay all the books he had published, with his unfinished manuscripts; the most extraordinary one was an elaborate narrative of the transactions of his own life. This manuscript his secretary read; and, as it proceeded, from the other table Dee presented the commissioners with every testimonial; these vouchers consisted of royal letters from the queen, and from princes, ambassadors, and the most illustrious persons of England and of Europe: passports which traced his routes, and journals which noted his arrivals and departures: grants and appointments, and other remarkable evidences; and, when these were wanting, he appealed to living witnesses.

Among the employments which he had filled, he particularly alludes to "a painful journey in the winter season, of more than fifteen hundred miles, to confer with learned physicians on the Continent about her majesty's health." He showed the offers of many princes to the English philosopher to retire to their courts, and the princely establishment at Moscow proffered by the czar; but he had never faltered in his devotion to his sovereign. He appealed to the clerks of the records of the Tower, and to other antiquaries,* for his free distribution of the manuscripts which he had often discovered. He complains that his house at Mortlake was too public for his studies, and incommodious for receiving the numerous foreign literati who resorted to him. Of all the promised preferments, he would have chosen the Mastership

* We have several manuscript letters which passed between DEE and STOWE. They show all the warmth of their literary intercourse. Dee offers his present aid, and promises his future assistance.

of St. Cross for its seclusion. Here is a great man making great demands, but reposing with dignity on his claims: his wants were urgent; but the penury was not in his spirit. The commissioners, as they listened to this autobiography, must often have raised their eyes in wonder on the venerable and dignified author before them.

The report was most favorable: the queen spontaneously declared that Dee should have St. Cross, and the incumbent might be removed to a bishopric. She allotted him a considerable pension, and commanded Lady Howard to write "words of comfort" to his wife; and further sent an immediate supply by the hands of Sir Thomas Gorge. The letter to his wife and the ready money were, however, the only tangible gift; for St. Cross and the pension he never received!

Two years after, we find Dee still memoralizing. He published "A Letter Apologetical, with a Plain Demonstration and Fervent Protestation for the Course of the Philosophical Studies of *a Certain Studious Gentleman*," 1599. This was a vindication against the odium of magical practices. At length, the archbishop installed him in the wardenship of Manchester College; but, though our adventurer now drew into harbor, it was his destiny to live in storms. The inmates always suspected him of concealing more secrets of Nature than he was willing to impart; and the philosopher, who had received from great men in Europe such testimonies of their admiration, now was hourly mortified by the petty malice of the obscure fellows of his college. After several years of contention, he resigned a college which no occult arts he possessed could govern.

His royal patroness was no more. The light and splendor of the court had sunk beneath the horizon; and, in the chill evening of his life, the visionary looked up to those who were not susceptible of his innocent sorcery. Still retaining his lofty pretensions, he addressed the king, and afterwards the parliament. He implored to be freed from vulgar calumnies,

and to be brought to trial, that a judicial sentence might clear him of all those foul suspicions which had clouded over his days for more than half a century. It is to be regretted that this trial did not take place: the accusations and the defence would have supplied no incurious chapter in the history of the human mind. A necromancer, and a favorite with Elizabeth, was not likely to be tolerated in the court of James the First. Cecil, who when young had been taught by his father to admire the erudition of the reformer of the Gregorian Calendar, was not the same person in the court of James the First as in that of Elizabeth: he resigned the sage to his solitude, and, with the policy of the statesman, only reasonably enough observed, that "Dee would shortly go mad!"

Misfortune could neither break nor change the ambitious spirit of the deserted philosopher. He still dreamed in a spiritual world which he never saw nor heard; and hopefully went on working his stills, deprived of the powder of projection. He sold his books for a meal; and, if the gossiper Aubrey may be trusted, in such daily distress he may have practised on the simplicity of his humble neighbors by sometimes recovering a stolen basket of linen, though it seems he refused the more solemn conjuration of casting a figure for a stray horse! It is only in this degradation of sordid misery that he is shown to us in the "Alchemist" of Jonson. Weary, as he aptly expresses himself, of "sailing against the wind's eye," in 1608, in the eighty-first year of his age, he resolved to abandon his native land. There was still another and a better world for the pilgrim of science; and it was during the preparations to rejoin his continental friends in Germany that death closed all future sorrows.

It was half a century after the decease of Dr. Dee, that the learned Meric Casaubon amazed the world by publishing the large folio containing "A True and Faithful Relation of what passed many Years between Dr. John Dee and some Spirits," 1659, from a copy in the Cottonian Library. Yet

is this huge volume but a torso: the mighty fragments, however, were recovered from the mischances of a kitchen fire, by Elias Ashmole, a virtuoso in alchemy and astrology, who toiled and trembled over the mystical and almost the interminable quires. Such is the fate of books! the world will for ever want the glorious fragments of Tacitus and Livy; but they have Dee passingly entire.*

Meric Casaubon was the learned son of a more learned father; but his erudition much exceeded his judgment. He had written a treatise against the delusions of "Enthusiasm," from whence the author derived but little benefit; for he demonstrated the existence of witches. Yet Meric Casaubon, meek and honest, was solicited by Cromwell to become his historiographer; but, from principle, he declined the profit and the honor: during the Oliverian rule, he became an hypochondriac, and has prefixed an hypochondriacal preface to this unparalleled volume. His faith is obsequious, and he confirms the verity of these conferences with "spirits" by showing that others before Dee had enjoyed such visitations. The fascination of a conference with "spirits" must have entered into the creed even of higher philosophers; for we are startled by discovering that the great Leibnitz observed on this preface, that "it deserves to be translated, *as well as the work itself*"! †

When this book of marvels was first published, the world was overcome by the revelations. Those saintly personages whose combined wisdom then assisted the councils of England, Owen, Goodwin, Nye, and others of that sort, held a solemn consistory for the suppression of the book. They entertained a violent suspicion that the whole of this incomprehensible

* The curious may find a copious narrative of the recovery of these manuscripts, written by Ashmole himself, printed in Ayscough's "Catalogue of Manuscripts," p. 371; where also he is referred to the autographs of Dee, in the British Museum.

† "General Dictionary," by Birch, art. *Meric Casaubon*, — Note B.

jargon was a covert design by some of the Church-of-England party, by a mockery of their own style, to expose the whole sainthood, who pretended so greatly to inspiration. But the bomb exploded at once, and spread in all directions; and, ere they could fit and unfit their textual debates, the book had been eagerly bought, and placed far beyond the reach of suppression.*

The "True Relation of what passed many Years between Dr. DEE and SOME SPIRITS" long excited curiosity which no one presumed to satisfy. During no less a period than five and twenty years was Dee recording what he terms his "Actions with Spirits;" for all was written by his own hand. It would be an extravagant inference to conclude, that a person of blameless character and grave habits would persevere through a good portion of his life in the profitless design of leaving a monument of posthumous folly solely to mystify posterity. Some fools of learning, indeed, have busied themselves in forging antiquities to bewilder some of their successors; but these malicious labors were the freaks of idle hours, not the devotion of a life. Even the imposture of Kelley will not wholly account for the credulity of Dee; for many years after their separation, and to his last days, Dee sought for, and at length found, another "skryer."† Are we to resolve these "Actions with Spirits" by the visions of another sage, a person eminent for his science, and a Rosicrucian of our own times, — that illustrious Emanuel Swedenborg,

* This literary anecdote I derive from a manuscript and contemporary note in the printed copy at the British Museum.

† This office of "skryer" is ambiguous: no dictionary will assist us. "In the year before he died, 1607, Dee procured one Bartholomew Hickman to serve him *in the same manner* as Kelley had done."—*Biog. Brit.*, v. 43. In what manner? Did Hickman pretend to descry the "actions of the spirits" in the show-stone, or only to drudge on the powder of projection? Forty years have elapsed since I turned over the interminable "Diary;" and now my eyes are dim, and my courage gone. I suspect, however, that that magical herb, eye-bright, however administered, will fail to penetrate through the darkness which surrounds the chaotic mass of manuscript.

who, in his reveries, communed with spirits and angels? It would thus be a great psychological phenomenon which remains unsolved.

No one has noticed, that a secret communication, uninterrupted through the protracted reign of Elizabeth, existed between the queen and the philosopher. The deep interest her majesty took in his welfare is strikingly revealed to us. Dee, in his frequent troubles, had constantly recourse to the queen; and she was ever prompt at his call. The personal attentions of the queen often gratified his master-passion: often she sent kind messages by her ladies and her courtiers; often was he received at Greenwich, Richmond, and at Windsor; and he was singularly honored by her majesty's visits at his house in Mortlake. The queen would sometimes appear waiting before his garden, when he would approach to kiss her hand, and solve some difficult inquiry she had prepared for him. On one of these occasions, Dee exhibited to her majesty a concave mirror, — a glass which had provoked too much awful discussion, but which would charm the queen while this Sir David Brewster of his age condescended to explain the optical illusions. When Dee, in his travels, was detained by sickness in Lorraine, her majesty despatched two of her own physicians to attend on this valued patient. The queen incessantly made golden promises of preferment: many eminent appointments were fixed on. He had, too, a patron in Leicester, the favorite of Elizabeth: for in that terrible state-libel of "Leicester's Commonwealth," among the instruments of that earl's dark agencies, we discover "Dee and Allen, two atheists, for figuring and conjuring;" that is, for astrological diagrams and magical invocations! * As, notwith-

* It requires a late posterity to correct the gross prejudices of contemporaries: it was not the least of the honors which Dee enjoyed to have been closely united with the studies of the "atheist" Allen, "the father of all learning and virtuous industry, infinitely beloved and admired by the court and the university." The ardent eulogy of Wood is earnest. — *Athen. Oxon.*, ii. 541

standing the profusion of the queen's designs for his promotion, he received but little, and that little late, the sincerity of the royal patron has been arraigned. Mysterious as the philosopher's cabalistic jargon with which he sometimes entertained her, her majesty seems to have remunerated empty phrases by providing notional places: but Elizabeth may not have deserved this hard censure; she unfailingly supplied her money-gifts,—a certain evidence of her sincerity! The truth seems to be, that royal promises may be frustrated by intervening competitors and ministerial expedients. At the court, the evil genius of Dee stood ever by his side, saluting the philosopher with no friendly voice, as "the arch-conjuror of the whole kingdom!" The philosopher struggled with the unconquerable prejudices of the age.

If we imagine that Elizabeth only looked on Dee as the great alchemist who was to replenish her coffers, or the mystic who propounded the world of spirits, this would not account for the queen permitting Dee to remain on the Continent during six years. Had such been the queen's hopes, she would have hermetically sealed the philosopher in his house at Mortlake, where, in her rides to Richmond, she might conveniently have watched the progress of gold-making, and listened to the theurgic revelations. Never would she have left this wanderer from court to court, with the chance of conveying to other princes such inappreciable results of the occult sciences.

What, then, was the cause of this intimate intercourse of the queen with Dr. Dee? and what the occasion of that mysterious journey of fifteen hundred miles in the winter season to consult physicians on her majesty's health, of which he had reminded the queen by her commissioners, but which they could not have comprehended? Did these mysterious physicians reside in one particular locality? and, in the vast intervening distance, were there no skilful physicians equally able for consultation?

A casual hint dropped by Lilly, the famous astrologer, will unveil the mysterious life of Dee during his six-years' residence abroad. Lilly tells us, that "for many years, in search of the profounder studies, he travelled into foreign parts: *to be serious*, he was Queen Elizabeth's intelligencer, and had a salary for his maintenance from the secretaries of state." Lilly, who is correct in his statements, except on the fabulous narratives of his professional art, must have written from some fact known to him; and it harmonizes with an ingenious theory to explain the unintelligible diary of Dee, suggested by Dr. ROBERT HOOKE, the eminent mathematician.

HOOKE, himself a great inventor in science, entertained a very high notion of the scientific character of Dee, and of his curiosity and dexterity in the philosophical arts, — optics, perspective, and mechanics. Deeply versed in chemistry, mathematics, and the prevalent study of astrology, like another Roger Bacon (or rather a Baptista Porta), delighting in the marvellous of philosophical experiments, he was sent abroad to amuse foreign princes, while he was really engaged by Elizabeth in state-affairs. Hooke, by turning over the awful tome, and comparing several circumstances with the history of his own life, was led to conclude that "all which relates to the spirits, their names, speeches, shows, noises, clothing, actions, &c., were all *cryptography;* feigned relations, concealing true ones of a very different nature. It was to prevent any accident, lest his papers should fall into hostile hands, that he preferred they should appear as the effusions of a visionary, rather than the secret history of a real spy. When the spirits are described as using inarticulate words unpronounceable according to the letters in which they are written, he conjectured that this gibberish would be understood by that book of Enoch which Dee prized so highly, and which Hooke considered to contain the cipher. Hooke, however, has not deciphered any of these inarticulate words; but, as the book of Enoch seems still to exist, this Apocalypse may

yet receive its commentator, — a task which it appears Dr. Adam Clarke once himself contemplated.*

There is one fatal objection to this ingenious theory of cryptography: this astounding diary opens long before Dee went abroad; and was continued long after his return, when it does not appear that he was employed in affairs of state.

* "As it is asserted that the six books of Mysteries transcribed from the papers of Dr. John Dee, by Elias Ashmole, Esq., preserved in the Sloane Library (Plutarch XVI., G), are a collection of papers relative to state transactions between Elizabeth, her ministers, and different foreign powers, in which Dr. Dee was employed sometimes as an official agent openly, and at other times as a spy, I purpose to make an extract from the whole work, and endeavor, if possible, to get a key to open the Mysteries. — A. C."— *Cat. of Adam Clarke's Manuscripts.*

THE ROSACRUSIAN FLUDD.

THE confraternity of the Rose-cross long attracted public notice. Congenial with the more ancient Freemasonry, it was probably designed for a more intellectual order: it was entitled "the Enlightened," "the Immortal," and "the Invisible." Its name has been frequently used to veil mysteries, to disguise secret agents, and to carry on those artful impostures which we know have been practised on infirm credulity by the dealers in thaumaturgical arts, to a very recent period. The modern illuminati, of whom not many years past we heard so much, are conjectured to have branched out of the sublime society of the Rose-cross.

This mystical order sprung up among that mystical people, the Germans, who are to this day debating on its origin; for, like other secret societies, its concealed source eludes the search. It was at the beginning of the seventeenth century, that a German divine, John Valentine Andreæ, a scholar of enlarged genius, in his controversial writings amused his readers by certain mysterious allusions to a society for the regeneration of science and religion: in the ambiguity of his language, it remained doubtful whether the society was already instituted, or was to be instituted. Suddenly a new name was noised through Europe, — the name of Christian Rosencreutz, the founder, three centuries back, of a secret society; and a eulogy of the order was dispersed in five different languages.

The name of the founder seemed as mystical as the secret

order, the Rose and the Cross.* The rose, with the Germans, which was placed in the centre of their ceiling, was the emblem of domestic confidence, — whence we have our phrase "under the rose;" and the cross, the consecrated symbol of Christianity, described the order's holy end: such notions might suit a mystical divine.† In the legend, the visionary founder was said to have brought from Palestine all the secrets of nature and of art, the elixir of longevity, and the stone so vainly called philosophical.‡

If to some the society had a problematical existence, others were convinced of its reality: learned men became its disciples, its defenders; and one eminent person published its laws and its customs. Michael Maier, the physician of the Emperor Rodolph, who had ennobled him for his services, having become initiated by some adepts, travelled over all Germany seeking every brother, and from their confidential instruction collected their laws and customs. At the same time, ROBERT FLUDD, a learned physician of our own country, distinguished for his science and his mysticism, introduced Rosacrusianism into England: its fervent disciple, he furnished an apology for the mystical brotherhood when it seemed to require one.

The arcane tomes of Fludd often spread, and still with

* Fuller's amusing explanation of the term Rosa-crusian was written without any knowledge of the supposititious founder. He says, "Sure I am that a Rose is the sweetest of flowers, and a Cross accounted the sacredest of forms and figures; so that much of eminency must be imported in their composition." — *Fuller's Worthies.*

† The chemists, in the style of their arcana, explain the term by the mystical union, in their secret operations, of the dew and the light. They derive the dew from the Latin *Ros;* and, in the figure of a cross ×, they trace the three letters which compose the word *Lux*, "light." Mosheim is positive in the accuracy of his information. I would not answer for my own, though somewhat more reasonable: it is indeed difficult to ascertain the origin of the name of a society which probably never had an existence.

‡ In the Harleian Manuscripts, from 6481 to 6486, are several Rosacrusian writings, some translated from the Latin by one Peter Smart, and others by a Dr. Rudd, who appears to have been a profound adept.

"the elect" may yet spread, an inebriating banquet of "the occult sciences," — all the reveries of the ancient cabalists, the abstractions of the lower Platonists, and the fancies of the modern Paracelsians, all that is mysterious and incomprehensible, with the rich condiment of science. There are some eyes which would still pierce into truths muffled in jargon and rhapsody, and dwell on the images of realities in the delirious dreams of the learned.

Two worlds, "the Macrocosm," or the great visible world of nature, and "the Microcosm," or the little world of man, form the comprehensive view, designed, to use Fludd's own terms, as "an encyclophy, or epitome of all arts and sciences."* This Rosacrusian philosopher seeks for man in Nature herself, and watches that creative power in her little mortal miniatures. In his Mosaic philosophy, founded on the first chapter of Genesis, our seer, standing in the midst of chaos, separates the three principles of the creation, — the palpable darkness, the movement of the waters, at length the divine light! The corporeity of angels and devils is distinguished on the principle of *rarum et densum*, thin or thick. Angelic beings, through their transparency, reflect the luminous Creator; but, externally formed of the most spiritual part of water or air, by contracting their vaporous subtilty, may "visibly and organically talk with man." The devils are of a heavy gross air; so Satan, the apostle called "the prince of air:" but in touch they are excessive cold, because the spirit by which they live, — as this philosopher proceeds to demonstrate, — drawn and contracted into the centre, the circumference of dilated air remains icy cold. From angels and demons, the Rosacrusian would approach

* These are his words in reply to his adversary Foster, the only work which he published in English, in consequence of the attack being in the vernacular idiom. The term here introduced into the language is, perhaps, our most ancient authority for the modern term *Encyclopædia*, which Chambers curtailed to *Cyclopædia*.

even to the Divinity: calculating the infinity by his geometry, he reveals the nature of the Divine Being, as "a pure monad, including in itself all numbers;" a paradoxical expression, lying more in the words than the idea, which called down an anathema on the impiety of our theosophist for ascribing "composition unto God." The occult philosopher warded off this perilous stroke. "If I have said that God is in composition, I mean it not as a part compounding, but as the sole compounder, in the apostolic style: 'He is over all, and in all.'" He detects the origin of evil in the union of the sexes: the sensual organs of the mother of mankind were first opened by the fruit which blasted the future human race. He broods over the mystery of life, — production and corruption, regeneration and resurrection! On the lighter topics of mortal studies he displays ingenious conceptions. The title of one of his treatises is "De Naturæ Simia," or "the Ape of Nature," — that is, ART! a single image, but a fertile principle.

Sympathies and antipathies, divine and human, are among the mysteries of our nature. By two universal principles, the boreal, or condensing power of cold, and the austral, or the rarefaction of heat, impulsion and repulsion, our physician explains the active operations in the human frame, — notions not wholly fanciful; but, at once medical and magical, this doctrine led him into one of the most extraordinary conceptions of mystical invention, yet which long survived the inventor, so seductive were the first follies of science.

Man exists in the perpetual opposition of sympathies and antipathies; and the cabalist in the human frame beheld the contests of spirits, benevolent or malign, trooping on the four viewless winds which were to be submitted to his occult potentiality. Nor was the physician unsuccessful; for, in the sweetness of his elocution, pleasant fancies and elevated conceptions operated on the charmed faith of his imaginative patients.

The mysterious qualities of the magnet were held by Fludd

as nothing less than an angelical effluvia. In his "Mystic Anatomy," to heal the wounds of a person miraculously, at any distance, he prescribed a cabalistical, astrological, and magnetic unguent. A drop of blood obtained from the wound mixed with this unguent, and the unguent applied to the identical instrument which inflicted the wound, would, however distant the patient resided, act and heal by the virtue of sympathy. This singular operation was ludicrously named "the weapon-salve."

Fludd not only produces the attestations of eminent persons, who, in charity we may believe, imagined that they had perfectly succeeded in practising his "mystic anatomy," but he also alleges for its authority the practice of Paul, who cured diseases by only requiring that the handkerchiefs and aprons of patients should be brought to him. Hardly a single extravagance of the Paracelsian fancy of Fludd but rests on some scriptural authority, on some fictitious statement, or some credulous imagination. Fludd, indeed, as our plain Oxford antiquary shrewdly opineth, was "strangely profound in obscure matters."* A curious tract was published by FLUDD, to clear himself from the odium of magical dealings, in reply to a fiery parson, one Foster, who took an extraordinary mode of getting his book read,—by nailing it at the door of the Rosacrusian at night, that it might be turned over in the morning by the whole parish! This was "A Sponge to Wipe away the Weapon-salve," showing that "to cure by applying the salve to the weapon is magical and unlawful." The parson evidently supposed that it did cure! Fludd replied by "the Squeezing of Parson Foster's Sponge.

* The collected writings of ROBERT FLUDD, under the Latinized name "De Fluctibus," should form six volumes folio. His "Philosophia Mosaica" has been translated, 1659, folio. He makes Moses a great Rosacrusian. The secret brotherhood must be still willing to give costly prices for their treasure. At the recent sale of Mr. Hibbert, the "Opera" of Fludd obtained twenty pounds! The copy was doubtless "very fine;" but the price was surely cabalistical. Nor are these tomes slightly valued on the Continent.

1631, 4to," — "to crush and squeeze his sponge, and make it by force to vomit up again the truth which it hath devoured." Our sage throughout displays the most tempered disposition and the most fervent genius; but the nonsense is equally curious.

We smile at the *sympathy* of "the weapon-salve;" but we must not forget that this occult power was the received philosophy of the days of our Rosacrusian. Who has not heard of "the sympathetic powder" of Sir Kenelm Digby, by which the bloody garter of James Howell was cured, and consequently its pleasant owner, without his own knowledge? or of the "sympathetic needles" of the great author of "Vulgar Errors," by which, though somewhat perplexed, he concluded that two lovers might correspond invisibly? and, above all others, the warts of the illustrious Verulam, by sympathy with the lard which had rubbed them, wasting away as the lard rotted when nailed on the chamber window? Lord Bacon acquaints us that "it is constantly received and avouched, that *the anointing of the weapon that maketh the wound* will heal the wound itself."* Indeed, Lord Bacon himself had discovered as magical a sympathy; for he presented Prince Henry, as "the first-fruits of his philosophy, *a sympathizing stone*, made of several mixtures, to know the heart of man," whose "operative gravity, magnetic and magical, would show, by the hand that held it, whether the heart was warm and affectionate." The philosophy of that day was infinitely more amusing than our own "exact" sciences!

We may smile at jargon in which we have not been initiated, at whimsical combinations we do not fancy, at analogies where we lose all semblance, and at fables which we know to be nothing more; but we may credit that these mys-

* "Lord Bacon's Natural History," cent. x. 998. — "In this experiment upon the relation of men of credit, though myself as *yet* am not fully inclined to believe it," his lordship gives ten notes or points as extraordinary as "the ointment" itself.

tical terms of the learned FLUDD conceal many profound and original views, and many truths not yet patent. It is enough that one of the deepest scholars, our illustrious SELDEN, highly appreciated the volumes and their author. It is indeed remarkable that Bayle, Niceron, and other literary historians, have not ventured to lay their hands on this ark of theosophical science; too modest to dispute, or too generous to attack: unlike the great adversary of Fludd, Père Mersenne, who denounced the Rosacrusian to Europe as a caco-magician, who had insured for himself perdition throughout eternity.

Père Mersenne, at Paris, stood at the head of the mathematical class; the early companion, and to his last day the earnest advocate, of Descartes. That great philosopher was secretly disposed not to reject all the reveries of the occult philosophers. It is certain that he had listened with complacency to the universal elixir, which was to preserve human life to an indefinite period; and one of his disciples, when he heard of his death, persisted in not crediting the account. His own vortices displayed the picturesque fancy of a Rosacrusian; and moreover, likewise, he was calumniated as an atheist. Père Mersenne not only defended his friend, but, to clear the French philosopher of any such disposition, he attacked the Rosacrusians themselves. Too vehement in his theological hatreds, he dared to publish too long a nomenclature of the atheists of his times;* and among Machiavel, Cardan, Campanella, and Vanini, appears the name of our pious Fludd. Mersenne expressed his astonishment that James the First suffered such a man to live and to write.

On this occasion, Fludd was more fortunate than Dee. He obtained an interview with his learned sovereign, to clear himself of "the friar's scandalous report." He found his majesty "regally learned and gracious; excellent and subtile in

* This list appeared in some Commentaries on Genesis, but was suppressed in most of the copies: the whole has, however, been recovered by Chauffepié in his Dictionary.

his inquisitive objections; and, instead of a check, I had much grace and honor from him, and I found him my kingly patron all the days of his life." Mersenne, notwithstanding the odium he cast on the personal character of Fludd, was willing to bribe the heresiarch; for he offered to unite with him in any work for the correction of science and art, provided Fludd would return to that catholic creed which his ancestors had professed. "I tell this to my countrymen's shame," exclaims Fludd, "who, instead of encouraging me in my labors, as by letters from Polonia, Suevia, Prussia, Germany, Transylvania, France, and Italy, I have had, do pursue with malice; which when a learned German heard of, it reminded him of the speech of Christ, that 'no man is a prophet in his own country.' Without any bragging of my knowledge, be it spoken, I speak this feelingly; but a guiltless conscience bids me be patient."

The writings of Fludd are all composed in Latin: it is remarkable that the works of an English officer, residing in England, should be printed at Frankfort, Oppenheim, and Gouda. This singularity is accounted for by the author himself. Fludd, in one respect, resembled Dee: he could find no English printers who would venture on their publication. When Foster insinuated that his character as a magician was so notorious, that he dared not print at home, Fludd tells his curious story: "I sent my writings beyond the seas, because our home-born printers demanded of me five hundred pounds to print the first volume, and to find the cuts in copper: but beyond the seas it was printed at no cost of mine, and as I could wish; and I had sixteen copies sent me over, with forty pounds in gold, as an unexpected gratuity for it." It is evident that, throughout Europe, they were infinitely more inquisitive in their occult speculations than we in England: and, however this may now seem to our credit, certainly our incuriosity was not then a consequence of our superior science; for he whose mighty mind was to give a new and enduring impulse to the

study of Nature, who was to teach us how to philosophize, and was now drawing us out of this dark forest of the human intellect into the lucid expanse of his creative mind, was himself still fascinated by magical sympathies, surmised why witches eat human flesh, and instructed us in the doctrine of spirits, angelic and demoniac. Bacon would have elucidated the theory of Dee and the imaginative mysticism of the Rosacrusian.

BACON.

In the age of Elizabeth, the English mind took its first bent: a new-born impulse in the nation everywhere was working out its religion, its legislation, and its literature. In every class of genius, there existed nothing to copy: every thing that was to be great was to find a beginning. Those maritime adventurers in this reign who sailed to discover new regions, and those heroes whose chivalric spirit was errant in the marshes of Holland, were not more enterprising than the creators of our peaceful literature.

Among these first Inventors, — our epical Spenser; our dramatic Shakspeare and Jonson; our Hooker, who sounded the depths of the origin of law; and our Rawleigh, who first opened the history of mankind, — at length appeared the philosopher who proclaimed a new philosophy, emancipating the human mind by breaking the chains of scholastic antiquity. He was a singular being who is recognized without his name.

Aristotle, in taking possession of all the regions of knowledge, from the first had assumed a universal monarchy, more real than that of his regal pupil; for he had subjugated the minds of generation after generation. Through a long succession of ages, and amid both extinct and new religions, the writings of the mighty Stagirite, however long known by mutilated and unfaithful versions, were equally studied by the Mahometan Arabian and the Rabbinical Hebrew; and, during the scholastic ages, were even placed by the side, and sometimes above, the gospel; and the ten categories, which pre-

tended to classify every object of human apprehension, were held as another revelation. Centuries succeeded to centuries; and the learned went on translating, commenting, and interpreting the sacred obscurity of the autocratical edict of a genius whose lofty omniscience seemed to partake in some degree of divinity itself.

But, from this passive obedience to a single encyclopedic mind, a fatal consequence ensued for mankind. The schoolmen had formed, as Lord Bacon has nobly expressed himself, "an unhallowed conjunction of divine with human matters;" theology itself was turned into a system, drawn out of the artificial arrangements of Aristotle; they made their orthodoxy dependent on "the scholastic gibberish;"* and to doubt any doctrine of "the philosopher," as Aristotle was paramountly called, might be to sin by a syllogism, — heretical, if not atheistical. In reality, it was to contend, without any possibility of escape, with the ecclesiastical establishment, whose integrity was based on the immovable conformity of all human opinions. Every university in Europe, whose honors and emoluments arose from their Aristotelian chairs, stood as the sentinels of each intellectual fortress. Speculative philosophy could therefore no further advance: it could not pass that inviolable circle which had circumscribed the universal knowledge of the human race. No one dared to think his own thoughts, to observe his own observations, lest by some fortuitous discovery, in differing from the Aristotelian dialectic, he might lapse from his Christianity. The scholastical sects were still agitating the same topics; for the same barbarous terms supplied, on all occasions, verbal disputations, which even bloody frays could never terminate.

* The Abate Andres, in his erudite "Origine, &c., d'ogni Letteratura," gives this remarkable description, — "*i* ghiribizzi *della Dialettica e Metafisica d'Aristotele.*" As we are at a loss to discover the origin of the term *gibberish*, and as it is suitable to the present occasion, may we conjecture that we have here found it? — xii. 26.

If we imagine that this awful fabric of the Aristotelian or scholastic philosophy was first shaken by the Verulamian, we should be conferring on a single individual a sudden influence which was far more progressive. In a great revolution, whence we date a new era, we are apt to lose sight of those devious paths and those marking incidents which in all human affairs are the prognostics and the preparations: the history of the human mind would be imperfectly revealed, should we not trace the great inventors in their precursors.

Early in the sixteenth century appeared simultaneously a number of extraordinary geniuses. An age of philosophical inventors seemed to arise; a new generation, who, each in his own way, were emancipating themselves from the dogmas of the ancient dictator. This revolt against the old scholastics broke forth in Italy, in Spain, in France, in Germany, and even reached our shores. These philosophers were the contemporaries of Luther: they had not engaged in his theological reformation; but it is more than probable that they had caught the inspiration of his hardy spirit. We are indeed told that the famous Cornelius Agrippa, though he could not desert the Rome of his patrons, yet saw with satisfaction its great pontiff attacked by Luther; as Erasmus and others equally delighted to satirize all the scholastic monkery.* Luther, too, made common cause with them, in the demolition of that ancient edifice of scholastic superstition, which, under the supremacy of Aristotle, barred out every free inquiry.

Of these eminent men, an elegant scholar, Ludovicus Vives, by birth a Spaniard, had been invited to the English court by our Henry the Eighth, to be the preceptor of the Princess Mary. Vives, too, was the friend of Erasmus; but, while that facetious sage only expended his raillery on the scholastic madness, Vives formally attacked the chief, whose final authority

* Enfield, ii. 448.

he declared had hitherto solely rested on the indolence of the human mind. Ramus, in France, advanced with more impetuous fury: he held a public disputation against the paramount authority of the Stagirite in philosophy; and, in his "Aristotelian Animadversions," he profanely shivered into atoms of absurdity the syllogistic method, and substituted for the logic of Aristotle one of his own, which was long received in all the schools of the reformed; for Ramus was a Huguenot. This innovator was denounced to the magistrate; for, by opposing Aristotle, he had committed open hostility against religion and learning! The erudite Abate Andres, probably an Aristotelian at heart, observes, in noticing the continued persecutions of this bold spirit, that, "to tell the truth, Ramus injured himself far more than the Aristotelian doctrine which he had impugned;"* and true enough, if it were a rival Aristotelian who cast Ramus out of the window, to be massacred by the mob on St. Bartholomew's Day. Two eminent scholars of Italy contested more successfully the doctrines of Aristotle: Patricius collected every thing he could to degrade and depreciate that philosopher, and to elevate the more seductive and imaginative Plato. He asserted that Aristotle was the plagiarist of other writers, whose writings he invariably affected to contemn; and he went so far as to suggest to the pope to prohibit the teaching of the Aristotelian doctrines in the schools; for the doctrines of Plato more harmoniously accorded with the Christian faith. Less learned, but more original, than Patricius, the Neapolitan Telesius struck out a new mode of philosophizing. The study of mathematics had indicated to Telesius a severe process in his investigations of Nature, and had taught him to reject those conjectural solutions of the phenomena of the material world, — subtleties and fictions which had led Aristotle into many errors, and whose universal authority had

* Andres "Dell' Origine e Progressi d'ogni Letteratura," xv. 165.

swayed opinions through successive ages. "Telesius," says Lord Bacon, "hath renewed the tenet of Parmenides, and is the best of our novelists."* Lord Bacon considered the Telesian system worthy of his development and his refutation. But, by his physical system, Telesius had broken the spell, and sent forth the naturalist to scrutinize more closely into Nature; and possibly this Neapolitan sage may have kindled the first spark in the experimental philosophy of Bacon.

All these were eminent philosophers who had indignantly rejected the eternal babble of the scholastics, and the vain dicta of the peripatetics; and in the same cycle were others more erratic and fantastic. These bold artificers of novel systems of philosophy had not unsuccessfully attacked the dogmas of Aristotle, but to little purpose, while they were substituting their own. The prevalent agitation of the philosophical spirit, now impetuous and disturbed, shot forth mighty impulses in imaginary directions, and created chimeras. Agrippa and Paracelsus, Jordano Bruno, Cardan and Campanella, played their "fantastic tricks," till the patient genius of the new philosophy arose simultaneously in the Italian Galileo and the founder of the Verulamian method.

Amid the ruins of these systems of philosophies, it was not with their fallen columns that Lord Bacon designed to construct a new philosophy of his own, — a system in opposition to other systems. He would hold no controversies; for refutations were useless, if the method he invented was a right one. He would not even be the founder of a sect; for he presumed not to establish a philosophy, but to show how we should philosophize. The father of experimental philosophy delivered no "opinions," but "a work;" patient observation, practical results, or new and enlarged sciences, "not to be found in the space of a single age, but through a succession of generations." D'Alembert observed, "The Baconian philosophy was too wise

* Montagu's Bacon, iv. 46.

to astonish." His early sagacity had detected the fatal error of all system-makers: each, to give coherence to his hypothesis, had recourse to some occult operation; and sometimes had ventured to give it a name which was nothing more than an abstract notion, and not a reality ascertained to exist in nature. The Platonist had buried his lofty head amid the clouds of theology, beyond the aspirations of man: the Aristotelian, by the syllogistic method of reasoning, had invented a mere instrument of perpetual disputation, without the acquisition of knowledge; and in the law which governed the material world, when Democritus had conceived his atom, and endowed it with a desire or appetency to move with other atoms, or Telesius imagined with cold and heat to find the first beginnings of motion, — what had they but contracted Nature within the bars of their systems, while she was perpetually escaping from them? The greater philosopher sought to follow Nature through her paths, to be "her servant and interpreter;" or, as he has also expressed it, "to subdue Nature by yielding to her."

Lord Bacon was conscious of the slow progress of truth; he has himself appealed to distant ages. So progressive is human reason, that a novel system, at its first announcement, has been resisted as the most dangerous innovation, or rejected as utterly false; yet, at a subsequent period, the first promulgator who had struck into the right road is censured, not for his temerity, but for his timidity, in not having advanced to its termination, and laying the burden on posterity to demonstrate that which he had only surmised or assumed. It is left to another generation to shoot their arrow forth a truer aim, far more distantly. Some of the most important results in philosophical inquiries, by men who have advanced beyond their own age, have been subjected to this inconvenience; and we now are familiarized to axioms and principles, requiring no further demonstration, which, in their original discovery, were condemned as dangerous and erroneous; for

the most novel principles must be disputed before they can be demonstrated, till Time in silence seals its decree with authority.

Some discoveries have required almost a century to be received; while some truths remain still problematical, and, like the ether of Newton, but a mere hypothesis. What is the wisdom of the wise but a state of progression? and the inventor has to encounter even the hostility of his brothers in science: even Lord Bacon himself was the victim of his own idols of the den, — those fallacies that originate from the peculiar character of the man; for, by undervaluing the science of mathematics, he refused his assent to the Copernican system.

The celebrity of Lord Bacon was often distinct from the Baconian philosophy at home, — a circumstance which concerns the history of our vernacular literature. The lofty pretensions of a new way to "the Advancement of Learning," and the "Novum Organum" of an art of invention, to invent arts, were long a veiled mystery to the English public, who were deterred from its study by the most offuscating translations of the Latin originals. English readers recognized in Lord Bacon, not the interpreter of Nature through all her works, but the interpreter of man to man, of their motives and their actions, in his "Sermones Fideles," those "Essaies" which "come home to our business and to our bosoms." Such readers were left to wonder how the historian of "the Winds," and of "Life and Death," the gatherer of medical receipts and of masses of natural history, amid all such minute processes of experiments and inductions, groping in tangible matter, as it seemed to ordinary eyes, could in the mere naturalist be the creator of a new philosophy of intellectual energy. The ethical sage who had unfolded the volume of the heart they delightfully comprehended; but how the mind itself stood connected with the outward phenomena of Nature remained long an enigma for the men of the world. Lord Bacon, in his dread to trust the mutability of our language

placed by the side of the universal language of the learned which fifteen centuries had fixed sacred from innovation, had concluded that the modern languages will "at one time or another play the bankrupt with books." The sage who, in his sanguine confidence in futurity, had predicted that "third period of time which will far surpass that of the Grecian and Roman learning," had not, however, contemplated on a national idiom; nor in that noble prospect of time had he anticipated a race of the European learned, whose vernacular prose would create words beyond the reach of the languages of antiquity. No work in our native idiom had yet taken a station. The volume of Hooker we know not how he read; but the copiousness of the diction little accorded with the English of the learned Lord Chancellor, who had pressed the compactness of his aphoristic sentences into the brevity of Seneca, but with a weight of thought no Roman, if we accept Tacitus, has attained. Rawleigh and Jonson were but contemporaries, unsanctioned by time; nor could he have looked even on them as modellers for him whose own genius was still more prodigally opulent, though not always with the most difficult taste.

Lord Bacon, therefore, decided to compose his "Instauratio Magna" in Latin. Dedicating the Latin version of the "Advancement of Learning" to the prince, he observed, "It is a work I think will live, and be a *citizen of the world, as English books are not.*" Lord Bacon saw "bankruptcy in our language," and houseless wanderers in our books. The commonwealth of letters had yet no existence. Haunted by this desolating notion that there was no perpetuity in English writings, he rested not till his own were translated by himself and his friends, Jonson and Hobbes and Herbert; and, often enlarging these Latin versions, some of his English compositions remain, in some respect, imperfect, when compared with those subsequent revisions in the Latin translations.

By trusting his genius to a foreign tongue, Lord Bacon has dimmed its lustre: the vitality of his thoughts in their origi-

nal force, the spontaneity of his mind in all its raciness, all those fortuitous strokes which are the felicities of genius, were lost to him who had condemned himself to the Roman yoke. Professor Playfair always preferred quoting the original English of those passages of the treatise "De Augmentis Scientiarum" which had first appeared in "the Advancement of Learning." The felicity of many of those fine or forcible conceptions is emasculated in a foreign and artificial idiom; and the invention of novel terms in an ancient language left it often in a clouded obscurity.

The hand of Lord Bacon had already moulded the language at pleasure, and he might have preceded his friend Hobbes in the lucidity of a philosophical style. The style of Lord Bacon is stamped with the originality of the age, and is as peculiar to him as was that of Shakspeare to the poet. He is not only the wittiest of writers in his remote allusions, but poetical in his fanciful conceptions. His style long served for a model to many succeeding writers. One of the most striking imitations is that curious folio of secret history, and brilliant sententiousness, and witty pedantry, the Life of Archbishop Williams by Bishop HACKET. It was with declining spirit Lord Bacon composed his "History of Henry the Seventh;" it was an oblation to majesty: the king himself was his critic; and the Solomon, as he terms Henry the Seventh, was that image of peaceful sovereignty which James affected.

He who thought that the language would have failed him has himself failed to the language, and we have lost an English classic. Since the experimental philosophy arose out of practical discoveries, it should not have been limited to recluse students, but open to the practitioners not yet philosophers, now condemned to study it by translations of a translation. It required two centuries before the writings of Bacon reached the many. Now, a single volume, in the most popular form, places them in the hands of artisans and ar-

tists, who are to learn from them to think, to observe, and to invent.

The first modern edition of the collected writings of Lord Bacon was that by Blackbourne, in 1730. It probably awoke the public attention: but English readers eager to possess themselves of the Baconian philosophy were still doomed to their old ignorance; for no one was yet to be found bold enough to risk versions, which in the mere translation often require to be elucidated. This first edition, however, hastened the arduous task of "methodizing" the philosophy of Bacon in English, by Dr. PETER SHAW, in 1733, who then suggested that the noble Baconian scheme had not been "sufficiently understood and regarded." This Dr. SHAW was one of the court physicians, attached to scientific pursuits, which he usefully displayed by popular lectures and writings on subjects with which the public were then not familiar. Imbued with the genius of Bacon, this diligent student unfortunately had a genius of his own: he fancied that he could reconstruct the works of our great philosopher by a more perfect arrangement. He separated, or he joined; he classed, and he new-named; and not the least curious of his singularities is that of assigning right principles for his wrong-doings. He did not abridge his author; for justly he observes, great works admit of no abridgment: but, to shorten their extent, he took the liberty of what he terms "dropping;" that is, "leaving out." Of his translations of the Latin originals, of which he experienced all the difficulty, he observes, that "a direct translation would have left the works more obscure than they are;" and therefore he adopted what he terms "an open version." A precise notion of this mode of free translation it might be difficult to fix on: it would be too open if it admitted what was not in the original, or if it suffered what was essential to escape. His irremissible sin was that of "modernizing the English" of Lord Bacon. The most racy and picturesque expressions of our elder writers

were then to be weakened down to a vapid colloquial style. Willymot had translated Lord Bacon's "Essays" from the Latin, and thus substituted his own loose incondite sentences, which he deemed "more fashionable language," for the brilliancy or the energy of Lord Bacon's native vein. Dr. Shaw's three goodly quartos, however, long conveyed in some shape to the English public the Baconian philosophy. There is something still seductive in these fair volumes, with their copious index, and a glossary of the philosophical terms invented by Bacon: I loved them in the early days of my studies, and they have been deemed worthy to be revived in a late edition.

In my youth, the illustrious name of Lord Bacon was more familiar to readers than his works; and they were more frequently reminded of the Lord Chancellor by the immortal verse of Pope than by that Life of Bacon by Mallet which may be read without discovering that the subject was the father of modern philosophy; excepting that in the last page, as if accidentally, there occurs a slight mention of the Great Instauration itself! The very choice of Mallet, in 1740, for an editor of Lord Bacon, is a striking evidence how imperfectly the genius of the instaurator of sciences was comprehended.

The psychological history of Lord Bacon has all that oneness which is the perfection of mind. We see him in his boyhood, studious of the phenomena of Nature, meditating on the multiplication of echoes at the brick-conduit, near his father's house: there he sought to discover the laws of sound; as in his latest days, when on the snowy road an experiment suddenly occurred, "touching the conservation and the induration of bodies," whether snow could not preserve flesh equally with salt. Alighting from his carriage, with his own hands he assisted the experiment, and was struck by that chilliness, which, a few days after, closed in death; yet the dying naturalist, too weak to write the last letter he dictated,

expressed his satisfaction that the experiment "answered excellently well."

But he who, by the cruelty of fortune and mortal infirmity, lived many lives in the span of one short life, ever wrestling with Nature to subdue her, could never subdue himself by himself. He idolized state and magnificence in his own person; the brilliancy of his robes and the blaze of his equipage his imagination seemed to feed on; he loved to be gazed on in the streets, and to be wondered at in the cabinet: but, with this feminine weakness, this philosopher was still so philosophic as to scorn the least prudential care of his fortune; so that, while he was enamoured of wealth, he could not bring himself down to the love of money. Participating in the corruptions of the age, he was himself incorruptible: the Lord Chancellor never gave a partial or unjust sentence; and Rushworth has told us, that not one of his decrees was ever reversed. Such a man was not made to crouch and to fawn, to breathe the infection of a corrupted court, to make himself the scapegoat in the mysterious darkness of court-intrigues; but he was this man of wretchedness! Truly he exclaimed one day, in grasping a volume, "For this only am I fitted." The intellectual architect who had modelled his house of Solomon, and should have been for ever the ideal inhabitant of that palace of the mind, was the tenant of an abode of disorder, where every one was master but its owner, a maculated man seeking to shelter himself in dejection and in shade. Whisperers, surmisers, evil eyes and evil tongues, the domestic asp whose bite sends poison into the veins of him on whom it hangs, — these were his familiars, while his abstracted mind was dictating to his chaplain the laws and economy of Nature.

Yet there were some better spirits in the mansion of Gorhambury, and even in the obscurity of Gray's Inn, who have left testimonies of their devotion to the great man long after his death. In the psychological history of Lord Bacon,

we must not pass by the psychological monument which the affectionate Sir Thomas Meautys, who, by his desire, lies buried at his feet, raised to his master. The design is as original as it is grand, and is said to have been the invention of Sir Henry Wotton, who, in his long residence abroad, had formed a refined taste for the arts which were yet strangers in England. The simplicity of our ancestors had placed their sculptured figures recumbent on their tombs: the taste of Wotton raised the marble figure to imitate life itself, and to give the mind of the original to its image. The monument of Bacon exhibits the great philosopher seated in profound contemplation in his habitual attitude; for the inscription records for posterity, *Sic sedebat.**

* See "Curiosities of Literature," art. "Bacon at Home."

THE FIRST FOUNDER OF A PUBLIC LIBRARY.

THE first marked advancement in the progress of the national understanding was made by a new race of public benefactors, who, in their munificence, no longer endowing obsolete superstitions and inefficient or misplaced charities, erected libraries, and opened academies; founders of those habitations of knowledge whose doors open to the bidding of all comers.

To the privacy and the silent labors of some men of letters and some lovers of the arts, usually classed under the general designation of COLLECTORS, literary Europe, for the great part, owes its public museums and its public libraries. It was their ripe knowledge only which could have created them, their opulence only which could render them worthy of a nation's purchase, or of its acceptance, when in their generous enthusiasm they consecrated the intellectual gift for their countrymen.

These collections could only have acquired their strength by their growth; for gradual were their acquisitions, and innumerable were their details: they claimed the sleepless vigilance of a whole life, the devotion of a whole fortune, and often that moral intrepidity which wrestled with insurmountable difficulties. We may admire the generous enthusiasm whose opulence was solely directed to enrich what hereafter was to be consecrated as public property; but it has not always received the notice and the eulogy so largely its due. It is but bare justice to distinguish these men from their numerous brothers whose collections have terminated with

themselves, known only to posterity by their posthumous catalogues, — the sole record that these collectors were great buyers and more famous sellers. Of many of the FOUNDERS of public collections, the names are not familiar to the reader; though some have sometimes been identified with their more celebrated collections, from the gratitude of a succeeding age.

A collection formed by a single mind, skilled in its favorite pursuit, becomes the tangible depository of the thoughts of its owner: there is a unity in this labor of love, and a secret connection through its dependent parts. Thus we are told that Cecil's library was the best for history; Walsingham's, for policy; Arundel's, for heraldry; Cotton's, for antiquity; and Usher's, for divinity. The completion of such a collection reflects the perfect image of the mind of the philosopher, the philologist, the antiquary, the naturalist, the scientific or the legal character, who into one locality has gathered together and arranged this furniture of the human intellect.

To disperse their collections, would be, to these elect spirits, to resolve them back into their first elements, — to scatter them in the air, or to mingle them with the dust.* Happily for mankind, these have been men to whom the perpetuity of their intellectual associations was a future existence. Conscious that their hands had fastened links in the unbroken chain of human inquiry, they left the legacy to the world. The creators of these collections have often betrayed their anxiety to preserve them distinct and entire. Confident I am that such was the real feeling of a recent celebrated collector. The rich and peculiar collection of manuscripts, and of rare and chosen volumes, of FRANCIS DOUCE, from his

* Sir Simonds d'Ewes feelingly describes in his will his "precious library." "It is my inviolable injunction that it be kept entire, and not sold, divided, or dissipated." It was not, however, to be locked up from the public good. Such was the feeling of an eminent antiquary.

A later Sir Simonds d'Ewes was an extravagant man, and seems to have sold every thing about 1716, when the collection passed into the possession of the Earl of Oxford.

earliest days had been the objects of his incessant cares. With means extremely restricted, but with a mind which no obstructions could swerve from its direct course, through many years he accomplished a glorious design. Our modest antiquary startled the most curious, not only of his countrymen, but of foreigners, by his knowledge, diversified as his own unrivalled collections, in the recondite literature of the middle ages, and whatever exhibited the manners, the customs, and the arts of every people and of every age. Late in life, he accidentally became the possessor of a considerable fortune; and, having decided that this work of his life should be a public inheritance, he seemed at a loss where it might at once rest in security, and lie patent for the world. The idea of its dispersion was very painful; for he was aware that the singleness of design which had assembled such various matters together could never be resumed by another. He often regretted, that, in the great national repository of literature, the collection would merge into the universal mass. It was about this time that we visited together the great library of Oxford. Douce contemplated in the Bodleian that arch over which is placed the portrait of SELDEN, and the library of Selden preserved entire; the antiquary's closet, which holds the great topographical collections of Gough; and the distinct shelves dedicated to the small Shakespearian library of MALONE. He observed that the collections of Rawlinson, of Tanner, and of others, had preserved their identity by their separation. This was the subject of our conversation. At this moment, Douce must have decided on the locality where his precious collection was to find a perpetual abode; for it was immediately on his return home that our literary antiquary bequeathed his collection to the Bodleian Library, where it now occupies more than one apartment.

To the anxious cares of such founders of public collections, England, as well as Italy and France, owes a national debt; nor can we pass over in silence the man to whom first occurred

the happy idea of instituting a library which should have for its owners his own fellow-citizens. A Florentine merchant, emancipated from the thraldom of traffic, vowed himself to the pursuits of literature, and, just before the art of printing was practised, to the preservation of manuscripts, which he not only multiplied by his unwearied hand, but was the first of that race of critics who amended the texts of the early copyists. What he could not purchase, his pure zeal was not the less solicitous to preserve. Boccaccio had bequeathed his own library to a convent in Florence, and its sight produced that effect on him which the library of Shakespeare, had it been preserved, might have had on an Englishman; and, since he could not possess it, he built an apartment solely to preserve it distinct from any other collection.

At a period when the owners of manuscripts were so avaricious of their possessions that they refused their loan, and were frugal even in allowing a sight of their leaves, the hardy generosity of this Florentine merchant conceived one of the most important designs for the interests of learning: to invite readers, he bequeathed his own as A PUBLIC LIBRARY.* He, who occupied but a private station, first offered Europe a model of patriotic greatness which princes and nobles in their magnificence would emulate. It has been said that the founder of this public library at Florence had only revived the noble design of the ancients, who had displayed their affection for literature by even bestowing their own names on public libraries: but this must not detract from the true glory of the merchant of Florence; it was at least an idea which had wholly escaped the less liberal of his learned contemporaries.

Sir THOMAS BODLEY may be considered as the first founder of a public library in this country, raised by the hand of an individual. A picture of the obstructions, the anxieties, the

* Tiraboschi, vi. pt. i. 131

hopes, and the disappointments of the founder of the Bodleian, exhibits a person of rank and opulence submitting even to minute drudgery, and to the most humiliating solicitations, and busily occupied by a foreign as well as a domestic correspondence, to accomplish what he long despaired of, — a library adequate to the wants of every English student.

Bodley, in the sketch of his own life, betrays that early book-love which subsequently broke out into that noble passion for "his reverend mother, the University of Oxford." Sir Thomas Bodley had ably served in some of the highest state employments, but at length discovered the secret pathway to escape from "court contentions;" and this he found when busying himself with a vast ideal library, — the future Bodleian! Long, indeed, it was but ideal; the labor of his day, the dream of his night, so slowly rose the reality of the fabric. It was difficult to determine on the class or the worth of authors, — often rejecting, always augmenting, still consulting, now advising, or being advised; sometimes irresolute and at others decisive; now exulting, and now despondent. However fervid was his noble enthusiasm for literature and for his library, not less remarkable was that provident sagacity which he combined with it, and by which only he could carry on the vast design.

What were the emotions of Bodley through this long period, what his first intentions, and what his immutable decision, have fortunately been laid open to us in a close correspondence with his first librarian. Our parent-founder of a public library, with the forcible simplicity of the natural colloquial style of that day, has developed his own character. "Examining exactly for the rest of my life what course I might take, and having sought, as I thought, all the ways to the wood, to select the most proper, I concluded, at the last, to set up my staff at the library-door in Oxon; being thoroughly persuaded, that, in my solitude and surcease from the commonwealth affairs, I could not busy myself to better pur-

pose." He early discovered that the formation of his library required the co-operation of many favorable circumstances: "Some kind of knowledge, some purse-ability, great store of honorable friends; else it would prove a vain attempt and inconsiderate." After many perplexities, the great resolve seemed to sanction the act; and he exclaims, "The project is cast; and, whether I live or die, to such ends altogether I address my thoughts and deeds!" Such was the solemn pledge, and such the deed of gift, which Bodley, in the greatness of his mind, contracted with posterity.

But the minor cares and the minuter anxieties were to open on him; and it must be confessed that he tried the patient duties of the learned Dr. James, whom he had judiciously elected for the first librarian, but who often vents a groan on his interminable labors. Sir Thomas gently reproaches him: "I am toiled exceedingly, no less than yourself, with writing, buying, binding, disposing, &c.; but I am fed with pleasure of seeing the end." Bodley had not only to form a universal library, but to build one on the desolate ruins of that founded by Duke Humphrey, whose royal name could not save his books and manuscripts, which had all been purloined and wasted. The pledges left for their loan not being worth half the value of the books, the volumes were never returned; and those which remained in the reign of Edward the Sixth were burned as "superstitious," for their rubrics and illuminations. The history of this library might have deterred our new founder, by reminding him of the fate which may await even on public libraries. At all events, for many years it required all his fortitude to encounter a rabble of master-carpenters, joiners, carvers, glaziers, builders, claspers, and stringers, and the chain-smiths; for, at that day, books were chained to their shelves, with chains long enough to reach the desk. A book was tethered, and could never stray from its paddock. Then came the classification and the arrangements! discussions not easily to be adjusted with his

librarian, whether a book should be classed as a work of theology or of politics. Sir Thomas found an incessant business at London in packing up "dry fats," or vats of books, barging them for Oxford: he was receiving fresh supplies from Italy, from Spain, from Turkey; and designed to send a scholar to travel in the East, to collect Arabic and Persian books, on which he sagaciously observed, that "in process of time, by the extraordinary diligence of some one student, these eastern languages may be readily understood." Bodley anticipated our Society for Oriental Literature.

But, not merely solicitous to erect a vast library, Bodley was equally anxious to consecrate the spot to study itself. He is uneasy at too public an admission, lest idlers should mix among the students, and, as he plainly tells, "be daily pestering the room with their gazing and babbling, and trampling up and down, disturbing the real studious." With what fervor he rejoices, when, at length, he lived to witness the day of the opening of the library, and found that "all proceeded orderly, and with such silence"! But, although he had bestowed all his cares and his fortune on this institution, it still was but an infant; and he had to look towards spirits as enlarged as his own to protect the orphan of the public. It met with some who adopted it, and Bodley had their names inscribed in the register of this public library: but he was as cautious as he was courteous; the vain were not to be gratified for penurious gifts. Books, and not names, were wanted. At first, impatiently zealous, he murmurs of "promises received for performances." But latterly he had occasion to exhort the university to mark by their particular acknowledgments the donations in volumes or in money. The honorable roll on which the names are inscribed includes not only those of the most eminent of our country, but also of several ladies, who rivalled those heroes and statesmen who had the honor of laying the foundation of the Bodleian Library.*

* See Gutch's edition of Wood's "Annals of the University of Oxford," vol. i. pt. ii. p. 928.

In Sir Thomas Bodley's character we view the conscious dignity of a great design, yet combined with the sedate reflection of a man practised in the world. There were certain traits of vanity, which may give a color to the insinuations of some, — who might consider they had been deprived of legacies, — that it was his enormous vanity which raised this edifice of learning. It is amusing to discover, that, when the Bishop of Exeter proposed to visit the library, a letter of Sir Thomas immediately precedes his visitor. "I pray you, observe his speeches, and liking or disliking; and, in your next, let me know it." When James the First was preparing to visit the library, he furnished hints to the librarian for his speech to the literary monarch: "It must not carry greater length than for half a quarter of an hour's utterance. It must be short and sweet, and full of stuff." The librarian was desirous to hide Buchanan when the king came down to Oxford; but Bodley, probably not approving the concealment of any of his literary stores, observed, "It will not avail to conceal him in his desk, since he is in the catalogue; nor have we any reason to take any notice of the king's dislike; but," he warily adds, "should it excite his majesty's notice, we must allege that the books were put there in the queen's time." But nothing save the most delicate attention towards an author could have prompted his order concerning Coryat the traveller, who had presented his book to the library. On the author's coming to Oxford, Sir Thomas desired that "it should be placed in such a manner, that, when the author came down, it may seem to magnify the author and the book." In his ardor for the general interests of his library, Bodley absolutely insisted that his librarian should persevere in his forlorn fellowship; for "marriage," opined the founder of the Bodleian Library, "is too full of domestic impeachments to afford him so much time from his private affairs." The doctor decided against the celibacy of a librarian, and was gravely admonished on the absurdity of such conduct in one who had

the care of a public library! for "it was opening a gap to disorder hereafter." With a happier prescience, Bodley foresaw that race of generous spirits, who long after, and at distant intervals, have carried on his great views. Listen to the simplicity and force of the venerable style of our first founder of a PUBLIC LIBRARY:—

"We cannot but presume, that, casting (counting) what number of noble benefactors have already concurred in a FERVOR OF AFFECTION to that PUBLIC PLACE OF STUDY, we shall be sure in TIME TO COME to find some OTHERS OF THE LIKE DISPOSITION to the advancement of learning."*

With such a hallowed purpose ever before him, can we conceive the agonies of the founder of a public library, on being for ever denied an entrance into it? and yet such was the fate of one of the most illustrious of this race. The mournful history of the founder of the Cottonian Library will ever excite the regrets of a grateful posterity, and its catastrophe will witness how far above life he loved and valued his collected lore. It happened, that, among the many rare manuscripts collected by Sir ROBERT COTTON, one reached his hands, which struck him by the singularity of the subject: it was a political theory, to show the kings of England "how to bridle the impertinency of parliaments." An unfaithful amanuensis, the son of the Dr. James whom we have just noticed, took copies, and sold them to the curious. When the original was at length traced to the Cottonian collection, Sir Robert was sued in the star-chamber, and considered as the author of a work whose tendency was to enslave the nation. It was long afterwards discovered, that this manu-

* The vigilant curiosity of Tom Hearne, the antiquary, collected the singular correspondence of the Founder of the Bodleian Library with Dr. James, the first librarian, and published it under the title of "Reliquiæ Bodleianæ, or Some Genuine Remains of Sir Thomas Bodley," 1703, 8vo. The curious reader will find in Gutch's edition of Wood's "Annals of the University of Oxford" many letters by Bodley, and his liberal endowments to provide a fixed revenue after his decease.

script had been originally written by Sir Robert Dudley, when in exile at Florence. Cotton was now denied all access to his library; his spirits sunk in the blackest melancholy; and he declared to an intimate friend, that "those who had locked up his library from him had broken his heart." Now deprived of that learned crowd who once were flowing into his house, consulting and arranging his precious manuscripts; torn away from the delightful business of his life, and in torment at the doubtful fate of that manuscript collection, which had consumed forty years, at every personal sacrifice, to form it for the "use and service of posterity,"—he sunk at the sudden stroke. In the course of a few weeks, he was so worn by injured feelings, that, from a ruddy-complexioned man, "his face was wholly changed into a grim blackish paleness, near to the resemblance and hue of a dead visage." Such is the expression of one who knew him well. Before he died, Sir Robert requested the learned Spelman to acquaint the Privy Council, that "their so long detaining his books from him had been the cause of his mortal malady." "On this message," says the writer of a manuscript letter of the day, "the Lord Privy Seal came to Sir Robert, when it was too late to comfort him, from the king; from whom also the Earl of Dorset came within half an hour of Sir Robert's death, to condole with Sir Thomas Cotton, his son, for his father's death; and, with an assurance that as his majesty loved his father, so he would continue his love to him: Sir Robert hath entailed his library of books as sure as he can make it upon his son and his posterity. If Sir Robert's heart could be ripped up, his library would appear in it, as Calais in Queen Mary's." Such is the affecting fate of the founder of the Cottonian Library,—that great individual, whose sole labor silently formed our national antiquities, and endowed his country with this wealth of manuscripts.

EARLY WRITERS, — THEIR DREAD OF THE PRESS; THE TRANSITION TO AUTHORS BY PROFESSION.

At the close of the reign of Elizabeth, the public, awakening at the first dawn of knowledge, with their stirring passions and their eager curiosity, found their wants supplied by a new race of "ready writers," who now teased the groaning press, — a diversified race of miscellaneous writers, who had discovered the wants of the people for books which excited their sympathies and reflected their experience, and who caught on their fugitive pages the manners and the passions of their contemporaries. No subject was too mean to be treated; and, had domestic encyclopædias been then invented, these would have been precisely the library the people required: but now every book was to be separately worked. The indiscriminate curiosity of an uneducated people was gratified by immature knowledge; but it was essential to amuse as well as to inform: hence that multitude of fugitive subjects. The mart of literature opened; and with the book-manufactory, in the language of that primeval critic, Webbe, of innumerable sorts of English books, and infinite fardles of printed pamphlets, "all shops were stuffed."

It has been attempted to fix on the name of that great patriarch, the Abraham of our Israel, who first invented our own book-craft; but it would be indiscreet to assign the honor to any particular person, or even to inquire whether the cupidity of the book-vender first set to work the ingenuity of the book-weaver. Who first dipped his silver pen into

his golden ink, and who first conceived the notion of this literary alchemy, which transmutes paper into gold or lead? It was, I believe, no solitary invention: the rush of "authors by profession" was simultaneous.

Former writers had fearfully courted fame; they were the children of the pleasures of the pen: these were a hardier race, who at once seized on popularity; and a new trade was opened by the arts of authorship. In the primitive age of publication, before there existed "a reading public," literary productions were often anonymous; or, which answered the same purpose, they wore the mask of a fictitious name, and were pseudonymous; or they hid themselves under naked initials, by which means the owners have sometimes lost their own property. It seems a paradox, that writers should take such great pains to defraud themselves of their claims.

This coyness of publication was prevalent among our earliest writers, when writing and publishing were not yet almost synonymous terms. Before we had "authors by profession," we had authors who wrote, and seemed to avoid every sort of publicity. To the secluded writers of that day, the press was arrayed with terrors which have ceased to haunt those who are familiar with its daily labors; and our primeval writers trembled before that halo of immortality which seemed to hang over that ponderous machinery. Writers eagerly affixed their names to polemical tracts, or to devotional effusions, during the melancholy reigns of EDWARD the Sixth and MARY, as a record of their zeal, and sometimes as an evidence of their voluntary martyrdom; but the productions of imagination and genius were yet rare and private. The noble-minded hardly ventured out of the halcyon state of manuscript to be tossed about in open sea: it would have been compromising their dignity, or disturbing their repose, to submit themselves to the cavils of the cynics; for, even at this early period of printed books, we find that the ancient family of the *Malevoli*, whom Terence has noticed, had sur-

vived the fall of Rome, and here did not find their "occupation gone." With many scholars, too, it was still doubtful whether the vernacular Muses in verse and prose were not trivial and homely. In the inchoate state of our literature, some who were imbued with classical studies might have felt their misgivings, in looking over their "gorgeous inventions" or their "pretty devices," as betraying undisciplined strength, bewildering fancies, and unformed tastes. They were not aware, even at that more advanced period, when a series of "poetical collections" appeared, of what they had already done; and it has been recently discovered, that, when the printer of "England's Helicon" had innocently affixed the names of some writers to their pieces, to quiet their alarms he was driven to the clumsy expedient of pasting slips of paper over their names. This was a spell which Time only dissolved, — that great revealer of secrets more deeply concealed.

When publication appeared thus terrible, an art which was not yet valued even the artists themselves would slight. We have a striking instance of this feeling in the circumstance of a sonnet of our Maiden Queen on the conspiracies then hatching by the party of her royal sister of Scotland. One of the ladies of her bedchamber had surreptitiously transcribed the poem from her majesty's tablet, and the innocent criminal had thereby cast herself into extreme peril. The queen affected, or at least expressed, her royal anger lest the people should imagine that she was busied in "such toys;" and her majesty was fearful of being considered too lightly of for so doing. The grave sonnet might, however, have been accepted as a state-paper. The solemn theme, the grandeur of the queenly personages, and the fortunes of two great nations at issue, communicated to these verses the profound emotions of contemplative royalty, more exquisite than the poetry. Yet Elizabeth could be checked by "the fear to be held too lightly by such toys."

The same motive had influenced some of the great personages in our literature, who, by the suppression of their names, anxiously eluded public observation, at the very moment they were in reality courting it! *Ignoto* and *Immerito*, or bare initials, were the concealing signatures of Rawleigh, of Sidney, and of Spenser. The works of the Earl of Surrey, then the finest poems in the language, were posthumous. "The Arcadia" of Sidney possibly was never intended for the press. The noble Sackville, who planned the grand poem of "the Mirror of Magistrates," willingly left his lofty "Induction" anonymous among the crowd. In the first poetical miscellany in our language, collected by the printer Tottell, are "the Poems of *uncertain Authors;*" so careless were the writers themselves to preserve their names, and so little aware of having claims on posterity. Some years after, when those other poetical collections, "the Paradise of Dainty Devices" and "England's Helicon," were projected by their publishers, they were borrowed or stolen from manuscripts which lay neglected with their authors, and who for the most part conceal themselves under quaint signatures.

The metropolis, in the days of Elizabeth and James, bore a pretty close resemblance to those ancient cities now existing before us on the Continent, famous in their day, but which, from causes not here necessary to specify, have not grown with the growth of time. Cologne, Coblentz, and Mayence, are such cities; and the city of Rouen, in its more ancient site, exhibits a picture of the streets of London in the days of Shakespeare. Stationary in their limits and their population, the classes of society are more distinctly marked out; but the individual lives more constantly under the survey of his neighbors. Their art of living is to live in the public eye to keep up appearances, however this pride may prove inconvenient. No one would seem to have an established household, or always care to indicate its locality: their meals are at a public table, and their familiar acquaintance are found

in the same public resorts; their social life becomes contracted as their own ancient narrow streets.

Such was London, when the Strand was a suburb, with only a few scattered mansions: the present streets still retain the family names, thus separating London from its regal sister. The glory of the goldsmiths and the mercers blazed in Cheapside, "the beauty of London;" and Fleet Street was the Bond Street of fashionable loungers. In this contracted sphere, where all moved, and the observers had microscopical eyes, any trivial novelty was strangely magnified, and the great personage was an object for their scrutiny as well as the least considerable. Thus we find that the Lord Chancellor Bacon is censured by one of the gossiping pens of that day for his inordinate pride and pomp on the most ordinary occasions. He went in his state robes "to cheapen and buy silks and velvets at Sir Baptist Hicker's and Burner's shops." James the First, I think, once in Parliament alluded to the "goldsmiths at Cheap, who showed not the bravery of former days," as a mark of the decline of national prosperity. One of the popular alarms of that day was "the rising of the apprentices," whenever the city's clumsy "watch and ward" were put to the rout: the apprentices usually made an attempt on their abhorrence, Bridewell; or pulled down two or three houses on Shrove-Tuesday. Once, on the trying of some ordnance in Moorfields, the court was seized by a panic of "a rising in the city." From all this we may form some notion of the size of the metropolis, and its imbecile police. In a vast and flourishing metropolis, the individual in liberty and security passes among the countless waves of this ocean of men.

A metropolis thus rising from its contracted infancy, extending in growth, and diversified by new classes of society, presented many novelties in its crowded scenes, — mutable manners, humorous personages, all the affectations or the homeliness of its citizens. Many writers, among whom were

some of admirable genius, devoted their pens to fugitive objects and evanescent scenes, sure of finding an immediate reception from the sympathy of their readers. New modes of life, and altered manners during a lengthened peace, brought men into closer observation of each other: the ranks in society were no longer insulated; their haunts were the same localities, — the play-house, the ordinary, and Paul's Walk. There we find the gay and the grave, — the disbanded captain; the critic from the inns of court; fantastic "fashion-mongers;" the cony-catcher, who watches "the warren;" and the gull, "town or country," — a term which, unlike that of "the cony-catcher," has survived the times before us, and is embedded in the language.* They even touched on the verge of that last refinement in society, — critical coteries. We learn from Jonson that there was "a college of critics," where a new member, "if he could pay for their suppers," might abuse the works of any man, and purchase for himself "the terrible name of a critic;" and ladies "lived free from their husbands," held coteries, and "gave entertainments to all the wits." This was the incipient state of the new world of manners, and what we now call "society;" and society provokes satire!

It was at the close of the Elizabethan period that our first town-satirists arose, from whom we learn the complicate system of manners, in the artifices practised in society; and, in

* This technical term, designating the class of youthful loungers, was a new term in 1596, when Sir John Davis wrote his "Epigrams:" —

> "Oft in my laughing rimes I name a GULL;
> But this *new terme* will many questions breed:
> Therefore, at first, I will expresse at full
> Who is a true and perfect Gull indeed."

His delineation is admirable: Gifford, in his "Jonson," quotes it at length, — i. 14. But whoever may be curious about these masculine "birds" will be initated into the mysteries of "Gullery" by "the Gulls' Horn-book" of DECKER, of which we have a beautiful edition, with appropriate embellishments, by Dr. Nott.

looking on their phantasmagorias, we are often startled among their grotesque forms by discovering our own exact faces. Satires on manners, descriptive of the lighter follies and the more involved artifices of social life, could hitherto have had no scope. The great in station alone constituted what may be considered as society, without any of those marking differences resulting from the inequalities of fortune. Satire then, as with Skelton, was an invective discharged at some potent individual at the risk of life; or it was an attack on a whole body, as Piers Ploughman's on the clergy of the times, while Will or John or Piers, whatever was his name, hid himself behind a hedge on Malvern Hills. Society, in the modern acceptation of a miscellaneous mixture, which equalizes men even in their inequality, supplying passing objects for raillery or indignation, opened that wider stage, which a growing metropolis only could exhibit. We must become intimate with men to sound even the depths of superficial follies, and declamation may even fall short in the conception of some enormous criminal. Society must have considerably advanced before a town-satirist could appear.

The change in style was not less remarkable than that in manners. Towards the close of the reign of Elizabeth, after the wild luxuriance of fancy which had everywhere covered the fresh soil of the public mind, in the riot of our genius, a great change was occurring in the minds of our writers. Nature, in her open paths of sunshine, no longer busied them, while they stole into the by-corners of abstract ideas, and roved after glittering conceits. Philosophy introduced itself into poetry, and wit became the substitute for passion. It was then that Sir John Davies wrote his "Immortality of the Soul," which still remains a model of didactic verse; and Donne, "the Progress of the Soul,"—a progress which he did not venture to conclude; a poem the most creative and eccentric in the language, but which must be reserved for

the few. Donne, who closed his life as a St. Austin, had opened it as a Catullus.

The depth of sentiment was contracted into sententious epigrams, alike in prose and verse; and, in the display of their ingenuity, the remotest objects were brought into collision, and the most differing things into a strange coherence, to startle by surprises, and to make us admire these wonders by their novelty. They cast about them their pointed antitheses, and often subsided into a clink of similar syllables, and the clinch of an ambiguous word.

In all matters they affected curt phrases; and it has been observed, that even the colloquial style was barbarously elliptical. They spoke gruff and short, affecting brevity of words, which was probably held to be epigrammatic. It became fashionable to write what they entitled books of "Epigrams" and books of "Characters." They appear to have taken their notion of an epigram from the Greek anthology, where the term was confined to any inscription for a statue or a tomb, or any object to be commemorated. Modern literature, in adopting the term, has applied it to a different purpose from its original signification. An epigram now is a short satire closing with a point of wit. Wit, in our present sense, was yet unpractised; and the modern epigram was not yet discovered. Ben Jonson has composed books of epigrams; but, though he has censured Sir John Harrington's as not being epigrams, but mere narratives, has written himself in the prevalent style of his day. They are short poems on persons, and on incidents in his own life, which he poured out to relieve his own feelings when they were outraged; and, so far, they are a reflection of the poet's state of mind,— the autobiography of his potent intellect. As among these epigrammatists we never had a Martial, so among these character-writers we could hardly expect a La Bruyère for his refined causticity; but the most skilful, as Sir Thomas

Overbury and Bishop Earle, are so witty as to seem grotesque, but it is human nature disguised in the fashions of the day.*

This infection of style must have come from a higher source than a mere fashionable affectation of the day; for it endured through half a century. The axiomatic style of Bacon in his "Essaies," which first appeared in 1597, probably set the model of the curt period for these Senecas in prose and verse, who found no difficulty in putting together short sentences, without, however, having discovered the art of short thoughts.

This change in style is considered as characteristic of the age of James; but it began before his reign. The age of this monarch has been universally condemned as the age of pedantry, and of quibbles and conceits, all which, indeed, have been liberally ascribed to his taste; but, in the plentiful evidence of his wit and humor, it would be difficult to find an instance of these bastard ornaments of style.

In the history of literature, the names of sovereigns usually only serve to mark its dates; and an "author-sovereign," to use Lord Shaftesbury's emphatic expression, can exercise no prerogative, and yields even his precedence. In more than one respect, JAMES THE FIRST may form an exception; for the barren list of his writings alone might serve to indicate the age: their subjects were not so peculiar to this monarch's taste as they were common with higher geniuses than his majesty.

When, on the throne of England, it was deemed advisable to collect his majesty's writings, the honor of the editorship was conferred on Montague, Bishop of Winton, whom Fuller has characterized as "a potent courtier;" and the courtly potency of the prelatical editor effuses itself before the "majesty of kings" in the most awful of all prefaces.

* Dr. Bliss has given an excellent edition of Bishop Earle's "Microcosmography; or, A Piece of the World discovered in Essays and Characters."

Cavillers there were, who, on distinct principles, objected to a king being a writer of books, carrying on war "by the pen instead of the pike, and spending his passion on paper instead of powder." This was a military cry from those whose "occupation had long gone." Others, more critically nice, assumed, that, "since writing of books had grown into a trade, it was as discreditable for a king to become an author as it would be for him to be a practitioner in a profession." Such objectors were not difficult to put down; and the bishop has furnished an ample catalogue of "royal authors" among all great nations, and, in our own, from Alfred to Elizabeth. The royal family of James were particularly distinguished for their literary acquirements. As that was the day when no argument could be urged without standing by the side of some authority, the bishop had done well, and no scholar in an upper class could have done better: but this bishop was imprudent; his restless courtliness fatigued his pen till he found a *divine origin of king-writing!* "The majesty of kings," he asserts, "is not unsuited to a writer of books;" and proceeds, "*The first royal author* is the King of kings,—God himself, who doth so many things for our imitation. It pleased his divine wisdom to be *the first in this rank*, that we read of, that did *ever write*. He wrote on the tables on both sides, which was the work of God." This was in the miserable strain of those unnatural thoughts and remote analogies which were long to disfigure the compositions even of our scholars. How James and the bishop looked on one another at their first meeting, after this preface was fairly read, one would like to learn; but here we have the age!

One work by this royal author must not pass away with the others: it is not only stamped with the idiosyncrasy of the author, but it is one of those original effusions which are precious to the history of man. "The Basilicon Doron, or His Majesty's Instructions to His Dearest Son Henry the Prince," is a genuine composition in the vernacular

idiom; not the prescribed labor of a secretary, nor the artificial composition of the salaried literary man, but warm with the personal emotions of the royal author. He writes for the Prince of Scotland, and about the Scottish people: he instructs the prince even by his own errors and misfortunes. Some might be surprised to find the king strenuously warning the prince against pedantry; exhorting his pupil to avoid what he calls any "corrupt leide, as book-language and pen-and-ink terms;" counselling him *to write in his own language*, "for it best becometh a king to purify and make famous his own tongue." To have ventured on so complete an emancipation from the prevalent prejudices, in the creation of a vernacular literature, is one evidence, among many, that this royal author was not a mere pedant; and the truth is, that his writings on popular subjects are colloquially unostentatious, abstaining from those oratorical periods and rhetorical fancies which the scholar indulged in his speeches and proclamations, — the more solemn labors of his own hand.

It is due to the literary character of James the First to notice his prompt sympathies with the productions of genius. This monarch had not exceeded his twentieth year when we find him in an intercourse with men of letters and science at home and abroad. The death of Sidney called forth an elegiac poem, and the works of the astronomer Tycho Brahe are adorned by a poetical tribute from the royal hand: during the winter the king passed in Denmark, he was a frequent visitor of the philosopher, on whom he conferred an honor and a privilege. That he addressed a letter to Shakespeare, grateful for the compliments received in "Macbeth," there is little reason to doubt; for Davenant, the possessor of the letter, which was finally lost, told it to the Duke of Buckingham; few traditions are so clearly traced to their source: and indeed some mark of James's attention to Shakespeare is positively told by Ben Jonson in his elegy on "the Swan of Avon:" —

> "What a sight it were
> To see thee on our waters yet appear,
> And make those flights upon the banks of Thames
> That so did take Eliza and OUR JAMES!" *

Hooker was the favorite vernacular author of James; and his earliest inquiry, on his arrival in England, was after Hooker whose death he deeply regretted. James wrote a congratulatory letter to Lord Bacon on his great work: the king at least bowed to the genius of the man. It was by the especial command of this royal "pedant," twenty-four years after the publication of Fairfax's "Tasso," that a second edition revived that version; and he provided Herbert the poet with a sinecure or pension, that his Muse might cease to be disturbed James the First was not only the patron of Ben Jonson, but admitted the bard to a literary intercourse; and it is probable that we owe to those conferences some of the splendor of the Masques, and in which there are many strokes of the familiar acquaintance of the poet with his royal admirer. More grave and important objects sometimes engaged his attention. It was James the First who assigned to the learned Usher the task of unfolding the antiquities of the British churches; and it was under the protection of this monarch that Father Paul composed the famous history, which, as fast as it was written, was despatched to England by our ambassador, Sir Henry Wotton; and, in this country, this great history was first published. These are not the only testimonies of his strong affection for literature and literary men; but they may surprise some who only hear of a pedant-king, who in reality was only a "learned" one.

* Every atom of candor is to be grudged to this hapless monarch: it is lamentable to see such a writer as Mr. Hallam prompt instantly to confirm a mere suggestion of Mr. Collier, that James could never have written a letter to Shakespeare, incapacitated to sympathize with the genial effusions of our poet.

THE AGE OF DOCTRINES.

We now leave the age of Imagination for the age of Doctrines: we have entered into another reign; and a new epoch arises in our literature, our tastes, and our manners.

We turn from the noble wrestlings of power, the stirrings of adventure, and the commanding genius of the Maiden Queen, to the uninterrupted level of a long protracted tranquillity; a fat soil, where all flourished to the eye, while it grew into rankness, and an atmosphere of corruption, breeding, in its unnatural heat, clouds of insects. A monarch arrived in the flush of new dominion with a small people, who, as an honest soul among them said, "having been forty years in the desert, were rushing to take possession of the promised land." All was to be the festival of an unbroken repose, — a court of shows and sports, the rejoicings of three kingdoms.

But the queen, with these dominions, had bequeathed her successor two troublesome legacies, in two redoubtable portions of the English public: both the Romanists, and those numerous dissenters emphatically called Puritans, were looking up to the new monarch, while the "true Protestants of Elizabeth" closed not their eyes in watchfulness over both papist and presbyter.

To the monarch from the Kirk of Scotland, which he had extolled for "the sincerest kirk in the world," as suited a Scottish sovereign, and who had once glanced with a presbyter's eye on "an evil mass in England," the English bishops hastened to offer the loyalty of their church. His more ancient acquaintance, the Puritans, were not behind the bish-

ops, nor without hope, to settle what they held to be "the purity" of church discipline: but James had drunk large draughts of a Scottish presbytery, and knew what lay at the bottom; he had tasted the dregs. He did not like the Puritans, and he told them why: to unking and to unbishop was "the parity" of their petty model of Geneva. The new monarch declared, perhaps he would not otherwise have been received, that "he came to maintain what the queen had established," — he demanded from the Puritans conformity to the State, and probably little imagined that they preferred martyrdom. James lived to see the day when silencing, ejecting, and expatiating ended in no other conformity than the common sufferings of the party.*

The claims of the Romanists were more tender than those of the sons of John Knox: they prayed only for a toleration. The monarch delayed what he dared not concede. He is charged by the nonconformist with being "very charitable" to these votaries of an indefeasible right of monarchy, and his project of "meeting them half-way" startled the English Protestant. What does the king mean? Are our doctrines the same? Are we to return to the confessional? purchase plenary pardons? require absolution and the salvation of souls from the Bishop of Rome?

The main objection of the king himself to what he styled "the corruption of the mother-church" was the papal supremacy, and its pretended power of deposing monarchs, or of granting a dispensation for their murder. Here the popular patriot exclaimed, "Was the great revolution of civil liberty made only for the prince's safety?" Whatever might be this revery of a coalition with Rome, Rome for ever baffled it by the never-ceasing principle of her one and indivisible divine autocracy. "The celestial court," omnipotent and omniscient, hurled its bolt at the pacific heretic of England.

* James granted to the Puritans the public discussion then prayed for, — the famous conference at Hampton Court.

It menaced his title, while its priests busily inculcated that "any thing may be done against heretics, because they are worse than Turks and Infidels:" then barrels of gunpowder were placed under his throne, and the papal breves equally shook his dominion by absolving the Romanists of England from their oath of allegiance. The English monarch chose to be the advocate of his own cause, to vindicate his regal rights, and to protest before all Europe against this monstrous usurpation. He wrote "the Apology for the Oath of Allegiance;" and we must concede to his tract this merit, that, if the cause were small, boundless and enduring was the effect. In every country in Europe, through all the ranks of the learned, and for many a year, this effusion of James occupied the pens alike of the advocates of the apostolical court, and of the promulgators of the emancipation of mankind;* nor is it remotely connected with the noble genius of Paul Sarpi, whose great work was first published in London, and patronized by the English monarch.

It was on a nation divided into unequal parts of irreconcilable opinions that James conferred the dubious blessing of a long peace: for twenty years there were no wars but the battle of pens, and the long artillery of a hundred volumes.

Polemical studies become political when the heads of parties mask themselves under some particular doctrine. Opinion only can neutralize opinion: but, in the age of doctrines before us, authority was considered stronger than opinion; and, in their unsettled notions and contested principles, each party seemed to itself impregnable. Every Æneas brandished his weapon, but could never wound the flitting chimeras. It was in the spirit of the age that Dr. Sutcliffe, the Dean of Exeter, laid the foundations of a college for controversies or disputations at Chelsea, on the banks of the quiet Thames. In this institution, the provost and

* A curious list of some of the more remarkable controversialists on both sides may be found in Irving's "Lives of the Scottish Poets," ii. 234.

the fellows were unceasingly to answer the Romanist and the Mar-Prelate. The fervent dean scraped together all his properties in many an odd shape to endow it, obtained a charter, and obscured his own name by calling it "King James's College." He lived to see a small building begun, but which, like the controversies, was not to be finished. A college for controversy verily required inexhaustible funds. When the day arrived that those became the masters whom those dogmatists had so constantly refuted, the controversial college was oddly changed into a manufactory of leather-guns, which probably were not more efficacious.

James ascended the English throne as a poor man comes to a large inheritance. In securing peace, he deemed he had granted the people all they desired; and he was the only monarch who cast a generous thought on their social recreations. That image of peace and of delight was to be reflected in the court: and, in that enchanted circle of flattery and of hope, the silvery voices of his silken parasites told how "he gave like a king;" but he himself, a man of simple habits, with an utter carelessness of money, learned a lesson which he never rightly comprehended how an exchequer might be voided.

James was a polemical monarch when polemics were political. But what creed or system did this royal polemic wholly adopt? Born of Roman-Catholic parents, and not abhorrent to the mother-church, for the childhood of antiquity had its charms for him; brought up among the Scottish Presbyterians, with whom he served a long accommodating apprenticeship of royalty, and, with the doctrines of the Anglican Church, become the sovereign of three realms, — did James, like his brother of France, modify his creed, for a crown, by the state-religion?

Behold this luckless philosopher on the throne closing the last accompts of his royalty with nothing but zeros in his own favor! By Puritans hated, by Romanists misliked, and

surrounded by trains of the "blue-bonnets," who were acted on the stage, and balladed in the streets; little gracious with his English subjects, to whom, from the first, "the coming-in" seemed as much like an invasion as an accession; never forgiven by the foreigner for his insular genius, whose pacific policy refused to enter into a project of visionary conquest; and finally falling into a new age, when the monarch, reduced to a mere metaphysical abstraction, whose prerogative and privilege were alike indefinite, had to wrestle with "the five hundred kings," as James once called the Commons, — deservedly or undeservedly, this monarch for all parties was a convenient subject for panegyric or for libel, true or false.

But, in reality, what was the character of James the First? Where shall we find it?*

* I have at least honestly attempted "An Inquiry into the Literary and Political Character of James the First."

PAMPHLETS.

PAMPHLETS, those leaves of the hour, and volumes of a season, and even of a week, slight and evanescent things as they appear, and scorned at by opposite parties, while each cherishes their own, are in truth the records of the public mind, the secret history of a people which does not always appear in the more open narrative: the true bent and temper of the times, the contending interests, the appeal of a party, or the voice of the nation, are nowhere so vividly brought before us as by these advocates of their own cause, too deeply interested to disguise their designs, and too contracted in their space to omit their essential points.

Of all the nations of Europe, our country first offered a rapid succession of these busy records of men's thoughts, their contending interests, their mightier passions, their aspirations, and sometimes even their follies. Wherever pamphlets abound, there is freedom; and therefore have we been a nation of pamphleteers. Even at the time when the press was not yet free, an invincible pamphlet struck a terror; the establishment of the Anglican Church under Elizabeth disturbed the little synagogue of Puritans, and provoked the fury of the Mar-Prelate pamphlets; the pacific reign of James covered the land with a new harvest of agricultural pamphlets: but when we entered on an age when men thought what they listed, and wrote what they thought, pamphlets ran through the land, and then the philosophical speculator on human affairs read what had never before been written; the troubles of Charles the First and the nation sounded the

trumpet of civil war by the blast of pamphlets; state-plots and state-cabals were hatched at least by the press, under the second Charles, and popery and arbitrary government terrified the nation by their pamphlets; the principles of English government and toleration expanded in the pamphlets of the reign of William the Third; even Locke's Treatises on Toleration and on Government were at first but pamphlets; and, under Anne, the nation observed the light skirmishes of Whig and Tory pamphlets.

Our neighbors, in their great revolutionary agitation, if they could not comprehend our constitution, imitated our arts of insurgency, and, from the same impulses, at length rivalled us: but the very term of *pamphlet* is English; and the practice seemed to them so novel, that a recent French biographer designates an early period of the French Revolution as one when "the art of PAMPHLETS had not yet reached perfection."

The history of pamphlets would form an extraordinary history; but whoever gathers a history from pamphlets must prepare for contradiction. Rushworth had formed a great collection to supply the materials of his volumes, but speaks slightly of them, while insinuating his own sagacity in separating truth from falsehood; but he concluded "very suspiciously," observed Oldys, that none need trouble themselves with any further examination than what he had been pleased to make. This suspicion was more manifest when Nalson began another collection from pamphlets to shake the evidence of the pamphlets of Rushworth. Each had found what he craved for: for whoever will look only into those on his favorite side finds enough written with his own passions, but he will obtain little extension of knowledge; for this is much like looking at his own face in the glass.

But we must not consider pamphlets wholly in a political view: their circuit is boundless, holding all the world of man; they enter into every object of human interest. The silent revolutions in manners, language, habits, are there to be

traced: the interest which was taken on novel objects of discovery would be wholly lost, were it not for these records; and, indeed, it is the multiplicity of pamphlets on a particular topic or object which appear at a particular period that offer the truest picture of public opinion.

Those who would not dare to compose a volume have fluttered in the leaves of a pamphlet. Three or four ideas are a good stock to set up a pamphlet, and look well in it, as picked wares in a shop-window. The mute, who cannot speak at a dinner or on the hustings, is eloquent in a pamphlet; and he who speaks only to excite the murmurs of his auditors amply vindicates himself by a pamphlet. I doubt whether there is a single important subject to which some English pamphlet may not form a necessary supplement. Many eminent in rank, or who, from their position, have never written any thing else, have written a pamphlet; and as the motive must be urgent which induces any such to have recourse to their pen, so the matter is of deeper interest; and it has often happened that the public have thence derived information which else had not reached them. The heads of parties have sometimes issued these manifestoes; and the tails, in the form of a pamphlet, have sometimes let out secrets for which they have been reprimanded.

Some of the most original conceptions, whose very errors or peculiarities even may instruct, lie hidden in pamphlets. These effusions of a more permanent nature than those of politics are usually literary, scientific, or artistical, the spontaneous productions of amateurs; the precious suggestions, and sometimes the original discoveries, of taste or enthusiasm. These are the *deliciæ* of the amenities of literature; and such pamphlets have often escaped our notice, since their writers were not authors, and had no works of their own among which to shelter them.

The age of Charles the First may be characterized as the age of pamphlets. Of that remarkable period, we possess an

extraordinary collection, which amounts to about thirty thousand pieces, uniformly bound in two thousand volumes of various sizes, accompanied by twelve folio volumes of the catalogue, chronologically arranged, exhibiting their full titles. Even the date of the day is noted when each pamphlet was published. It includes a hundred in manuscript written on the king's side, which at the time were not allowed to be printed. The formation of this collection is a romantic incident in the annals of bibliography.

In that critical year, 1640, a bookseller of the name of Thomason conceived the idea of preserving, in that new age of contested principles, an unbroken chain of men's arguments and men's doings. We may suppose that this collector, commencing with the year 1640, and continuing without omission or interruption to the year 1660, could not at first have imagined the vast career he had to run: there was, perhaps, sagacity in the first thought; but there was far more intrepidity in never relinquishing this favorite object during these perilous twenty years, amid a conflict of costly expenditure, of personal danger, and almost insurmountable difficulties.

The design was carried on in secrecy through confidential servants, who at first buried the volumes as they collected them; but they soon became too numerous for such a mode of concealment. The owner, dreading that the ruling government would seize on the collection, watched the movements of the army of the Commonwealth, and carried this itinerant library in every opposite direction. Many were its removals, northward or westward; but the danger became so great, and the collection so bulky, that he had at one time an intention to pass them over into Holland, but feared to trust his treasure to the waves. He at length determined to place them in his warehouses, in the form of tables round the room, covered with canvas. It is evident that the loyalty of the man had rendered him a suspected person: for he was once dragged from his bed, and imprisoned for seven weeks; during

which time, however, the collection suffered no interruption, nor was the secret betrayed.

The secret was, however, evidently not unknown to some faithful servants of the king; for when, in 1647, his majesty at Hampton Court desired to see a particular pamphlet, it was obtained for him from this collection, though the collector was somewhat chary of the loan, fearing the loss of what he felt as a limb of his body, not probably recoverable. The king had the volume with him in his flight towards the Isle of Wight; but it was returned to the owner, with his majesty's earnest exhortation that he should diligently continue the collection. A slight accident which happened to the volume occasioned the collector to leave this interesting incident on record.*

* In vol. 100, small quarto, we find the following memorandum:—

"Mem'dum that Col[l] Will Legg and Mr. Arthur Treavor were employed by his Majes[e] K. Ch. to gett for his present use a pamphl[t] which his majestie had then occasion to make use of, & not meeting with it, they both come to me, having heard that I did employ myself to rake up all such things from the beginning of that Parliament, and finding it with me, told me it was for his majestys own use. I told them all I had were at his maj[y] command and service, & withal told them if I should part with it & loose it — presuming that when his majestie had done with it, that little account would be made of it, and that if I should loose it, by that loss a limb of my collection, which I should be very loath to see, well knowing it would be impossible to supplie it if it should happen to be lost; with which answer they returned to his majes[e] at Hampton C[t] (as I take it) & tould him they had found the person which had it, & withal how loath he that had it was to part with it, he much fearing its loss. Whereupon they came to me again from his maj[e] to tell me that upon the word of a king (to use the king's own expressions) they would safely return it, whereupon immediately by them I sent it to his majestie. Who having done with it, & having it with him when he was going towards the Isle of Wight, let it fall in the *durt*, and then calling for the two persons (who attended him) delivered it to them with a charge as they would answer it another day, that they should both speedily & safely return it to him from whom they had received it, and withal to desire the party to go on & continue what had begun. Which book, together with his Maj[ties] signification to me, by these worthy and faithful gents, I received both speedily and safely. My volume hath that mark of honour which no other volume in my collection hath, & v[y] diligently and carefully I continued the same until that

When Cromwell ruled, a place of greater security was sought for than the owner's warehouses: a fictitious sale was made to the University of Oxford, who would be more able to struggle for their preservation than a private individual, if the protector discovered and claimed these distracted documents of the history of his own times.

Mr. Thomason lived to complete his design: he witnessed the restoration, and died in 1666, leaving his important collection, which was still lodged at Oxford, and which he describes in his will "as not to be paralleled," in trust to be sold for the benefit of his children. His will affords an evidence that he was a person of warm patriotic feelings, with a singular turn of mind; for he left a stipend of forty shillings for two sermons to be annually preached, one of which was to commemorate the destruction of the Armada.

The collection continued at Oxford many years, awaiting a purchaser;* and at length appears to have been bought by Mearne, "the king's stationer," at the command of the Secretary of State for Charles the Second: but Charles, who would little value old pamphlets, and more particularly these, which only reminded him of such mortifying occurrences, by an order in council in 1684 munificently allowed the widow of Mearne to dispose of them as well as she could. In 1709 we find them offered to Lord Weymouth,† and in 1732 they were

most hapie restoration & coronation of his most gratious majestie King Charle y^e^ 2d, whom God long preserve. "GEO. THOMASON."

The volume bears the "honours" of its mischance. There are a great number of stains on the edges of the leaves, — some more than an inch in depth. The accident must have happened on the road in the king's flight, from the marks of the mud.

* In 1676, Dr. Barlow, one of the trustees, writes to the Rev. George Thomason, who was a fellow of Queen's College and the eldest son of the collector, respecting the collection and its value. The letter is printed in Beloe's "Anecdotes of Literature," vol. ii.

† A letter from Dr. Jenkin, who was chaplain to Lord Weymouth, to Mr. Baker, Dec. 3, 1709: "There is another rarity then to be sold, which is proffered to my lord, — a collection of pamphlets, in number 30,000, bound in

still undisposed of; but in those times of loyal rebellion, either for the assumption or the restoration of the throne, that of the commonwealth excited so little interest, and this extraordinary collection was so depreciated, that Oldys then considered it would not reach the twentieth part of the four thousand pounds which it was said that the collector had once refused for it.* In 1745 a representative of the Mearne Family still held the volumes;† and eventually they were purchased at the small price of three or four hundred pounds by George the Third, and by him were presented to the national library, where they now bear the name of the King's Pamphlets.

Thus having escaped from seizure and dispersion, this noble collection remained in the hands of those who priced it as a valueless encumbrance, and yet seemed to have respected the

2,000 volumes. The collection was begun by Charles First in 1640, and continued to 1660. In a printed paper, where I saw this account, it is said the collectors refused £4,000 for them." — *Masters's Life of Rev. Thomas Baker*, p. 28.

* "Phœnix Britannicus," — "Oldys's Dissertation upon Pamphlets," p. 556. Oldys drew up an account of these pamphlets from "the Memoirs of the Curious," published in 1701. He says that the collection was made by *Tomlinson, the bookseller;* and the catalogue by Marmaduke Foster, the auctioneer; and relates a traditional story, that it is reported that Charles the First gave ten pounds for reading one of these pamphlets, at the owner's house in St. Paul's Churchyard. This collection was not commenced until November, 1640; and the king left London in January, 1642: during this time the collection could not be very numerous, nor would there be that difficulty in seeing a pamphlet as at the subsequent more distracted period. It is curious to trace the origin of traditionary tales: they often stand on a rickety foundation. We find that the king did borrow a pamphlet, but at a time when he could not hasten to St. Paul's Churchyard to read it: we may presume that the bookseller did not charge his majesty so disloyal a price as ten pounds for the perusal of a single pamphlet; he probably received only the king's approbation of his design, which doubtless was no slight stimulus to its completion.

† A Mr. Sisson, a druggist in Ludgate Street, who died in 1749: they then became the property of his relative, Miss Sisson, who seems gladly to have disburdened herself of this domestic grievance in 1761. — *Hollis's Memoirs*, p. 121.

object of the enterprise; for they preserved it entire. It may be some consolation to such intrepid collectors, that their intelligence and their fervor are not in vain; and, however they may fail in the attainment of their motive, a great end may fortunately be achieved.

THE "OCEANA" OF HARRINGTON.

THE hardy paradoxes, not wholly without foundation, and the humiliating truths so mortifying to human nature, of the mighty "Leviathan," whose author was little disposed to flatter or to elevate his brothers,* were opposed by an ideal government, more generous in its sympathies, and less obtrusive of brute force or "the public sword," in the "OCEANA" of JAMES HARRINGTON.

Free from mere party motives of the Monarchist or the Commonwealth-man, for he gratified neither, Harrington was the greatest of political theorists; and his "political architecture," with all his "models of government, notional and practicable," still remains for us, and has not been overlooked by some framers of constitutions.

The psychological history of HARRINGTON combines with his works. His was a thoughtful youth, like that of Sidney, of Milton, and Gray, which never needed correction, but rather kept those around him in awe. Among the usual studies of his age, it was an enterprise to have acquired the modern languages, as entering into an extensive plan of foreign travel, which the boy had already decided on. The death of his father before his legal age enabled him to realize this project. Political studies, however, had not yet occurred to him; and, when he left England, he "knew no more of monarchy, anarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, or oligarchy, than

* I must refer the reader for the development of the system of Hobbes to the Essay on Hobbes in the "Quarrels of Authors" (last edition, p. 436).

as hard words for which he was obliged to look into the dictionary."

In Holland he first contemplated on the image of popular liberty, recent from the yoke of Spain: it was a young people rejoicing in the holiday of freedom. There he found a friend in the fugitive Queen of Bohemia: his uncle, Lord Harrington, had been the governor of that spirited princess. He passed over into Denmark with the crownless elector, soliciting for that aid which no political prudence could afford. He resisted the seductions of those noble friendships in pursuit of his great plan. He entered France, he loitered in Germany, and at length advanced into Italy. At Rome, he refused to bestow on his holiness the prostrate salutation; and when some Englishmen complained of their compatriot's stiffness to Charles the First, who reminded the young philosopher that he might have performed a courteous custom as to a temporal prince, the reply was happy: "Having kissed his majesty's hand, he would always hold it beneath him to kiss any prince's toe."

Our future political theorist was deeply struck in his admiration of the aristocratic government of Venice, which he conceived to be the most perfect and durable government hitherto planned by the wit of man. Such was the prevalent notion throughout Europe concerning a government existing in secrecy and mystery! In Italy he found politics, literature, and art; and provided himself with a rich store of Italian books, especially on political topics. Machiavelli with him was "the prince of politicians;" but he has opened his great work with the name of another Italian, "Janotti (Giannotti), the most excellent describer of the Commonwealth of Venice." Giannotti is a name, which, though it has not shared the celebrity of Machiavelli, seems to have been that of a more practical politician; for Giannotti at length obtained that honorable secretaryship of Florence, the loss of which, it is said, so deeply mortified the lofty spirit of his greater rival, that the

illustrious ex-secretary died of grief, which his philosophy should have quieted.

Harrington returned home an accomplished cavalier; but the commonwealth of Holland, the aristocracy of Venice, the absolute monarchy of France, imperial Germany, and what else he had contemplated in the Northern courts, must have furnished to his thoughtful mind the elements of his theory of politics.

He returned home to the privacy of his studies, refusing any public employment; but that he kept up an intercourse with the court, appears by his personal acquaintance with the king. Many years form a blank in his life: once, indeed, he had made an ineffectual attempt to enter parliament, but failed, though his sentiments were well known in favor of popular government. It is probable, that in that unhappy period, when persons and events were alike of so mixed and ambiguous a character, our philosopher could not sympathize with the clash of temporary passions.

When the king was to be conveyed from Newcastle in 1646, Harrington was chosen to attend his person, as "a gentleman well known to the king before, and who had never engaged with any party whatever." He was then in his thirty-fifth year.

This appointment of Harrington was agreeable to the king. Charles found in Harrington the character he well knew how to appreciate. He conversed on books and pictures and foreign affairs, and found a ripe scholar, a travelled mind, and a genius overflowing with strange speculative notions. Their conversations were free: Harrington did not conceal his predilection for commonwealth institutions, at which the king was impatient. Neither could bring the other to his own side; for each was fixed in taking opposite views, — the one looking to the advantages of monarchy, and the other to those of a republic. The only subject they could differ on never interrupted their affections: the theoretical commonwealth-

man and the practical monarch, in their daily intercourse, found that they had a heart for each other.

In Charles the First, Harrington discovered a personage unlike the distorted image which political passions had long held out. In adversity, the softened prince seemed only to be "the man of sorrows." On one occasion, Harrington vindicated the king's conduct, and urged that the royal concessions were satisfactory. This strong personal attachment to Charles alarmed the party in power. Harrington was ordered away. He subsequently visited the king when at St. James's, and was present at the awful act of the decapitation. Charles presented Harrington with a last memorial. Aubrey, who knew Harrington, may tell the rest of his story: "Mr. Harrington was on the scaffold with the king when he was beheaded: and I have ofttimes heard him speak of King Charles the First with the greatest zeal and passion imaginable; and that his death gave him so great grief, that he contracted a disease by it; that never any thing did go so near to him."

The agony of that terrible day afflicted Harrington with a malady from which he was never afterwards freed: a profound melancholy preyed upon his spirits; he withdrew into utter seclusion, not to mourn, but to despond. His friends were alarmed at a hermit's melancholy: some imagined that his affection for the king had deranged his intellect; others ascribed his seclusion to mere discontent with the times.

To rid himself of friendly importunities, and to evince that his mind was not deranged, whatever might be his feelings, he confided to his circle that he had long been occupied in the study of civil government, to invent an art which should prevent the disorders of a state. It was his opinion, that "a government is not of so accidental or arbitrary institution as people imagine; for in society there are natural causes producing their necessary effects as well as in the earth or the air." The passionless sage was so discriminately just, that he declared that "our late troubles were not wholly to be

ascribed to the misgovernment of the prince, nor to the stubbornness of the people, but to the nature of certain changes which had happened to the nation." He then, for their curious admiration, disclosed the perfect model of a commonwealth in his "OCEANA."

OCEANA, or England, was the model of "a free state:" a political "equality" was its basis, — equality to be guarded by a number of devices. Harrington laid the foundation of politics, on the principle that *empire follows the balance of property*, whether lodged in one, in a few, or in many. Toland asserts that this was as noble a discovery as that of the circulation of the blood, of printing, gunpowder, or the compass, or optic glasses: the Newtonian gravity had not then been established, or doubtless it had been enumerated.

To preserve the political equality, there were to be "balances" in dominion and in property. An agrarian law, by its distributions suitable to the rank of the individual, and which were never to be enlarged nor diminished, would prevent any man, or any party, overpowering the people by their possessions. All those states in Europe which were the remains of Gothic dominion were thrown into internal conflicts by their "overbalances." The overbalance of one man was tyranny; of a few, was oligarchy; of the many, was rebellion, or anarchy.* The perpetual shifting of their "balances" had produced all their disturbances. He traced this history in extinct governments as well as in our own. So refined were his political optics, that he discerned when our kings had broken Magna Charta some thirty times; and, during the reign of Charles the First, he asserts that these "balances" had been altered nine times.

The "balance of property" being the foundation of the

* The masterpiece of legislation of Abbé Sieyes; who, during the French Revolution, had always a new constitution in his pocket, was founded on this principle of "checks and balances in the state," evidently adopted from Harrington. In Scott's "Life of Napoleon," vol. iv., the Abbé Sieyes' system is described.

commonwealth, the superstructure was raised of magistracy. Magistracy was to proceed by "rotation," and to be settled by the "ballot." The senate was to be elected by the purity of suffrage, which was to be found in the balloting-box; and, in this rotatory government, the third part of the senate would be wheeled out at their fixed terms. The senate by these self-purgations would renovate its youth; and the sovereign authority, by this unceasing movement, would act in its perpetual integrity.

In this equal commonwealth, no party can be at variance with or gain ground upon another; and as there can be no factions, so neither will there be any seditions; because the people are without the power or the interest to raise commotions: they would be as likely to throw themselves into the sea as to disturb the state. It is one of his political axioms, that, where the public interest governs, it is a government of laws; but, where a private interest, it is a government of men, and not of laws.

HARRINGTON was no admirer of a mixed monarchy: his political logic includes some important truths. "In a mixed monarchy, the nobility sometimes imposing chains on the king or domineering over the people, the king is either oppressing the people without control, or contending with the nobility, as their protectors; and the people are frequently in arms against both king and nobles, till at last one of the three estates becomes master of the other two, or till they so mutually weaken one another, that either they fall a prey to some more potent government, or naturally grow into a commonwealth, — therefore mixed monarchy is not a perfect government; but, if no such parties can possibly exist in OCEANA, then it is the most equal, perfect, and immortal commonwealth. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*"

The "equality" of Harrington, however, was not fashioned to any vulgar notions of a levelling democracy. He maintained the distinctions of orders in society. The great

founder of a commonwealth was first a *gentleman*, from Moses downwards: though, he says, "there be great divines, poets, lawyers, great men in all professions, the genius of a great politician is peculiar to *the genius of a gentleman*." And further: "An army may as well consist of soldiers without officers, or of officers without soldiers, as a commonwealth (especially such an one as is capable of greatness) consist of a people without gentry, or of a gentry without a people."

A work of such original invention, replete with the most curious developments of all former political institutions, of which the author proposed to resume the advantages and to supply the deficiencies, from the ancient commonwealth of Moses to the recent republic of the Hollanders, and moreover throwing out some novel general views of our own national history, formed a volume opportune to engage public attention. It was enlivened by the pleasing form of a romance, where, in the council of the legislators, the debaters plead for their favorite form of government with infinite spirit.

The publication of "Oceana" was, however, long retarded: first, by the honesty of our sage; and, secondly, by the influence of two very opposite parties equally alarmed. Harrington was anxious that his proselytes should debate his opinions, and even partially promulgate them in their pamphlets, before he ventured to publish them. What he ably elucidated they faithfully repeated: the consequence of this indiscretion was, that the novelty had lost its gloss; and, when finally his great discovery of empire following the balance of property appeared, the author was reproached for its obviousness. Every great principle appears obvious when once ascertained. The vague rumors that had spread, that a new model of government was about to appear, made the Cromwellites and the cavaliers alike alert in their opposition: the bashaws of the great sultan, the new lords and major-generals of the Protector, sate uneasy in their usurped seats: the cavaliers, who knew Harrington's predisposition for re-

publican institutions, loudly remonstrated. The author was compelled to send his papers to the printers by stealth and by snatches, dispersing them among different presses. The first edition of "Oceana" exhibits a strange appearance in a confusion of all sorts of types and characters, — black letter, Italian and Roman, accompanied by an unparalleled "List of Errors of the Press," being several folio pages with double columns! The author has even marked the lacerations of his panting and hunted volume from "a spaniel questing who hath sprung my book out of one press into two other." The myrmidons of Oliver hunted down their game from press to press, and at length pounced on their prey, and, with a Pyrrhic triumph, bore it to Whitehall.

All solicitations of the author to retrieve his endeared volume proved fruitless: in despair, he ventured on a singular expedient. Lady Claypole, the daughter of the Protector, studied to be exceedingly gracious, and to play the princess. Unacquainted with her ladyship, Harrington requested an audience. Waiting in the antechamber, her little daughter soon attracted his attention: carrying her in his arms, he entered the presence-chamber, and declared that he had a design to steal the young lady, — not from love, but for revenge.

"Have I injured you?"

"Not at all! but your father has stolen my child, and then you would have interceded for its restoration."

The parable of the parental author was easily explained: the pleasing manners of the elegant cavalier, which were not commonly seen in the new court of the protectorate, doubtless assisted the petitioner with the recent princess of the revolution. "Are you sure," she earnestly inquired, "that your book contains nothing against my father's government?"

"It is a political romance! to be dedicated to your father, and the first copy to be opened by yourself."

Lady Claypole conceived there could not be any treason in a romance. She persuaded Oliver to look it over himself:

the Protector, who there found himself as "the Lord Archon of Oceana," and probably with his sharp judgment deeming the whole "a romance," returned it; dryly observing, that "the power which he had got by the sword he would not quit for a little paper-shot:" but he added, with his accustomed sanctimonious policy, that "he as little approved as the gentleman of the government of a *single person*, but that he had been compelled to take the office of High-Constable to preserve the peace among all parties who could never agree among themselves."

"Oceana" was published at a crisis when the people were still to be enchanted by the name of "Commonwealth;" though they began to think that they had been mistaken in their choice, since their grievances had been heavier than under the old monarchy which they had dissolved. Harrington familiarly compared their present unquiet state to that of a company of puppy-dogs cramped up in a bag, when, finding themselves ill at ease for want of room, every one of them bites the tail or the foot of his neighbor, supposing that to be the source of his misery. To such a restless people, a continual change of rulers on the rotatory system seemed a great relief: any worse than their present masters they would not suppose. "The Rota" of Harrington became so popular, that a club was established bearing its name; and they held their debates every evening, with doors open for auditors or orators.

This political club was the resort of the finest geniuses of the age, many of whom have left their eminent names in our history and our literature. The members sat at a circular table, — the table of ancient knighthood and modern equality, which left a passage open within its circuit to have their coffee delivered hot, without any interruption to the speaker or "the state of the nation." A contemporary assures us that these debates were more ingenious and spirited than he had ever heard, and that those in parliament were flat to them. Every decision how affairs should be carried was left to the balloting-

box, — "a box in which there is no cogging," observes the master-genius of "the Rota."

This "balloting" and the principle of "rotation" were hateful to the parliamentarians; for, as we are told, "they were cursed tyrants, in love with their power, and this was death to them." HENRY NEVILLE, the author of "Plato Redivivus," the constant associate of Harrington, and who, Hobbes (alluding to the "Oceana") said, "had a finger in the pie," had the boldness to propose the system of "rotation" to the House; warning them, that, if they did not accept that model of government, they would shortly fall into ruins. In their then ticklish condition, the House had the decency to return their thanks, and the intrepidity to keep their places.

This perfectioned model of a government, when opened for the inspection of mankind, exhibited a glorious framework: but it seemed questionable whether this political clockwork or intellectual mechanism could perform its exact librations, depending on a number of "balances" to preserve its nice equilibrium; and whether it could last for perpetuity by that "rotatory" motion by wheels which were never to cease. Some objected, that the author in the science of politics had been fascinated, as some in mechanics, who imagined that they had discovered "the perpetual motion." But this objection the constructor of this "political architecture" indignantly rejected. He knew that the capacity of matter can only work as long as it lasts, and therefore there can be no perpetual motion; but "the mathematician must not take God to be such as he is. The equal commonwealth is built up by the understandings of the people. Now, the people never die: they are not brute matter. This movement of theirs comes from the hands of the Eternal Mover, — even God himself."

This romance of politics has been pronounced by a high authority as "one of the boasts of English literature;" and the philosophic Hume has even ventured to pronounce the work as "the *only valuable model of a commonwealth* that has

yet been offered to the public." Perhaps the historian would pass it off as "the only valuable one," from a conviction that it was perfectly harmless. It is worthy of remark, that when, in 1688, a grand *auto da fé* was performed by the University of Oxford on certain political works, — when they condemned to the flames Baxter's "Holy Commonwealth," written against Harrington's "Heathen Commonwealth," as Baxter calls "Oceana," with Hobbes and Milton and others, — no one proposed this condign punishment to the manes of Harrington; considering, no doubt, that a romance was too impracticable as a political system. Yet the republican party has always held to "Oceana" as their text-book; and it was with this view that TOLAND edited this great work, and, in his Life of Milton, has declared "Oceana" to be an unrivalled model of a commonwealth, for its *practicableness*, *equality*, and completeness; and once HOLLIS, during the fervor of founding a republic in Corsica, recommended by public advertisement "Oceana" as the most perfect model of a free government.

"OCEANA" has perpetuated a thoughtful politician's dreams. But are there no realities in dreams? Even in dreaming, a great artist often combines conceptions too fugitive, too mysterious, too beauteous, for his palpable canvas. And thus the fanciful pictures of our philosophical politician were the results of his deep and varied studies in the ancient and modern writings on the science of politics, — from Aristotle to Machiavel, from Machiavel to Hobbes. His pages are studded with axioms of policy, and impress us by many an enduring truth. His style is not always polished, and is sometimes perplexed: but no writer has exceeded him in the felicity and boldness of his phrases; and his pen, though busied on higher matters, sparkles with imagery and illustration.

That a mind so sagacious and even predictive as was that of Harrington's in the uncertainty of human events should be led away by theoretical fallacies, is an useful example for

political speculators.* Constantly he extols the dark mysterious dominion of aristocratic Venice, "being a commonwealth having no causes of dissolution." He dwells on "the rotation of its senate," and its prompt, remedial, concealed power. "It is immortal in its nature, and to this day she stands with one thousand years of tranquillity on her back; notwithstanding," he thoughtfully adds, "that this government consists of men not without sin."

A single day of treason sufficed to terminate this immortal commonwealth of Venice, with all its "ballotings" and "its rotations," and its hidden and horrible dictature, where sate the council of "Three" in their dark conclave, like the sister-fates, the arbiters of every soul in Venice. Alas for that folly of the wise, who, in the delusion of a theory, to support the edifice of imagination, disguise the truths which might shake it! The advocate of a free state, he who pretends to draw sovereignty from the hands of a people, is the perpetual eulogist of the most refined tyranny that ever swayed the destiny of a people. Spirit of Harrington! meditate in thy sepulchral city, motionless and naked as she lies, there to correct so many passages of admiration which spread their illusion in thy "OCEANA"!

Harrington was equally fallible on the strength of his political axiom, "that the balance of power depends on that

* I think that Harrington presciently detected the latent causes of a great revolution in France. The curiosity of the passage may compensate for its length:—

"Where there is tumbling and tossing upon the bed of sickness, it must end in death or recovery. Though the people of the world, in the dregs of the Gothic Empire, be yet tumbling and tossing upon the bed of sickness, they cannot die; nor is there any means of recovery for them but by ancient prudence: whence, of necessity, it must come to pass that this drug be better known. If *France*, *Italy*, and *Spain* were not all sick, all corrupted together, there would be none of them so; for the sick would not be able to withstand the sound, nor the sound to preserve their health without curing of the sick. *The first of these nations, which, if you stay her leisure, will, in my mind, be France*, that recovers the health of ancient prudence, shall certainly *govern the world*." — *Oceana*, p. 168; edition 1771.

of property:" applying it to his own critical period, he pronounced that it was impossible ever to re-establish monarchy among English commonwealth-men. Property had changed possessors: it could never revert to its former owners. Four years after "Oceana" was published, and "the Rota Club" was still illumining the nation, the commonwealth returned to monarchy by a beck, and without a word!

Theoretical politicians too often omit, in their artificial constructions and their moral calculations, something more prompt to act in the conduct of men than even their interests, — the stirring passions of ambition, of faction, and the vacillations of "the sovereign people," now maddening for a republic, now rushing into a monarchy, "tumbling and tossing upon their bed of sickness."

When the Restoration arrived, however it may have deranged the system, it seems not to have disturbed the systematizer. He observed, that "the king comes in: if he calls a parliament of the cavaliers on our great estates, let them sit seven years, and they will all turn commonwealth-men." He retained in all its force his master-passion of ideal politics. He now decided to reduce "Oceana" into plain axioms, divested of tedious argumentation and formal demonstration, adapted to the most vulgar capacities. He was easily induced to offer some immediate instructions for the king's service. A paper was first shown to some of the courtiers, who suspected treason in any scheme where their particular interests were not at all consulted. One morning, when Harrington was busily engaged, with all his aphorisms lying loose on a table before him, suddenly entered Sir William Poultency and other officers to seize on the philosopher and the philosophy "for treasonable designs and practices." As they were huddling together the scattered members of the "Oceanic" mind, the innocent philosopher, innocent of treason, begged the favor of "stitching them together" before they were

taken to Whitehall. The derangement of his system appeared to him more dreadful than seeing himself hurried to the Tower.

Harrington had kept up his intimacy with old friends, among whom were many commonwealth-men, from Major Wildman, an intriguing Cromwellite, down to the notorious Barebones; on whom he declared, however, that he had only called "at his shop" thrice in his life. He was now involved in a pretended plot, which the chancellor himself, though furnished with accounts of the meetings of certain parties, declared that he could make nothing of. A speculative politician was a very suspicious person in the days of restoration. Harrington, assuredly, was no plotter. Our philosopher contrived to send his sisters his examination before his relative Lord Lauderdale and others, curious for its topics of discussion, and the poignancy of the dialogue. I cannot pass by one singular passage: —

"You charge me with being eminent in principles contrary to the king's government and the laws of this nation. Some, my lord, say, that I, being a private man, have been so mad as to meddle with politics: what had a private man to do with government? My lord, there is not any *public* person, not any *magistrate*, that has written in politics, worth a button. All they that have been excellent in this way have been private men, — as private men as myself. There is Plato, there is Aristotle, there is Livy, there is Machiavel. My lord, I can sum up Aristotle's politics in a very few words: he says there is the barbarous monarchy, such a one where the people have no votes in making the laws; he says there is the heroic monarchy, such a one where the people have their votes in making the laws; and then he says there is democracy, and affirms that a man cannot be said to have liberty but in a democracy only."

My Lord Lauderdale, who thus far had been very attentive, at this showed some impatience.

Har. — "I say, Aristotle says so: I have not said so much. And under what prince was it? Was it not under Alexander, the greatest prince in the world? Did Alexander hang up Aristotle? did he molest him?" And he proceeds with Livy, who wrote under Cæsar, and the commonwealth-man, Machiavel, under the Medici, unmolested.

"I wrote under an usurper, Oliver. He having started up into the throne, his officers kept a murmuring for a commonwealth. He told them that he knew not what they meant; but, let any one show him that there was any such thing as a commonwealth, they should see that he sought not himself: the Lord knew he only sought to make good the cause. Upon this, some sober men thought, that, if any in England could show what a commonwealth was, it was myself. I wrote; and, after I had written, Oliver never answered his officers as he had done before: therefore I wrote not against the king's government; and, if the law could have punished me, Oliver had done it; therefore my writing was not obnoxious to the law. After Oliver, the parliament said they were a commonwealth: I said they were not; and proved it, insomuch that the parliament accounted me a cavalier, and one that had no other design in my writing than to bring in the king; and now the king, first of any man, makes me a Roundhead!"

Certainly no theoretical politician has ever more lucidly set before us the cruel dilemmas of speculative science.

The story of HARRINGTON now becomes calamitous. In vain his sisters petitioned that the prisoner, for his justification, should be brought to trial: no one dared to present the petition to parliament. He was suddenly carried off to St. Nicholas Island, near Plymouth; and, by favor, afterwards was lodged in Plymouth Castle, where the governor treated the state-prisoner with the kindness he had long wanted. His health gradually gave way; his mind fell into disorder; his high spirit and his heated brain could not brook this tor-

menting durance; his intellect was at times clouded by some singular delusions; and his family imagined that it was intended that he should never more write "Oceanas." The physician of the castle had prescribed constant doses of guaiacum taken in coffee. At length, other physicians were despatched by his family: they found an emaciated patient deprived of sleep; and, under their hands, testified that the copious use of this deleterious beverage, with such drying drugs, was sufficient to occasion hypochondriasm, and even frenzy, in any one who had not even a predisposition. The surly physician of the state-prison insisted that Harrington counterfeited madness.

His delusions never left him; yet otherwise his faculties remained unaltered. He had strange fancies about the operations of the animal spirits, good and evil; and often alarmed his friends by his vivacious descriptions of these invisible agencies. "Nature," he said, "which works under a veil, is the heart of God." But how are we to account, in a mind otherwise sane, for his notion, that his thoughts transpired from him, and took the shapes of flies or bees? Aubrey has given a gossiper's account of this ludicrous hypochondriasm. Harrington had a summer-house revolving on a pivot, which he turned at will to face the sun: there sat the great author of "Oceana," whisking a fox's brush to disperse this annoyance of his transpired thoughts in the flies or bees; which whenever they issued from crevices, he would appeal to those present, whether it was not evident to them that they had emerged from his brain. An eminent physician had flattered himself that he would be able to out-reason this delusion by that force of argument and positive demonstration to which his illustrious patient only would attend; but the physician discovered that no argument could avail with the most invincible disputant in Europe. The sanity of the man only strengthened his insanity. Besides, our philosopher believed that he had discovered a new system of physiology in what

he called "the Mechanics of Nature." Harrington declared that his fate was that of Democritus, who, having made a great discovery in anatomy, was deemed mad by his associates, till Hippocrates appeared, and attested the glorious truth, confounding the laughers for ever! He now resolved to prove against his doctors, that his notions were not, as they alleged, hypochondriacal whims or fanciful delusions. Among his manuscripts was found this promised treatise, thus opening: "Having been for nine months, some say, in a disease, I in a cure, I have been the wonder of physicians, and they mine!" It is much to be regretted that the first part of this singular design has only reached us, wherein he has laid down his axioms, many of which are indisputable, coherent, and philosophical, however chimerical might have been their application to his particular notions. The narrative of his own disorder, which was to form the second part, would have been a great psychological curiosity: for the philosopher was there to have told us how "he had felt and saw Nature; that is, how she came first into his senses, and by the senses into the understanding," and "to speak to men that have had the same sensations as himself." The logical deliriums of Harrington, it is not impossible, might have thrown a beam of light on "the Human Nature" of Hobbes and "the Understanding" of Locke.

It is for the medical character to develop the mysteries of this condition of man; but this moral phenomenon of the partial delusions of the noblest intellect remains an enigma they have not yet solved. Harrington never recovered his physical energy, while his "understanding" betrayed no symptoms of any decay in the exercise of his vigorous faculties.

There is one dark cloud which dusks the lustre of the name of HARRINGTON. Opening the volume of his works, we are startled by an elaborate treatise on "the Grounds and Reasons of Monarchy." It is not merely one of the most

eloquent invectives against monarchical institutions, but it overflows with the most withering defamations, such as were prevalent at that distempered season, when the popular writers accumulated horrors on the memories of their late sovereigns, to metamorphose their monarchs into monsters. In this terrible state-libel, all kings are anathematized: James the First was the murderer of his son; Charles the First was a parricide. Of that "resolute tyrant Charles," we have an allusion to "his actions of the day, his actions of the night;" from which we must infer that they were equally criminal.

The reader, already acquainted with the intimate intercourse of our author with Charles the First, and with all his permanent emotions, which probably induced his mental disorder, must start at the disparity of the writing with the writer. A thorough-paced partisan has here acted on the base principle of reviling the individual whom he privately acknowledged to be wholly of an opposite character. It would be a solecism in human nature, had Harrington sent forth an historical calumny, which only to have read must have inflicted a deep pang in his heart. He was a philosopher, who neither flattered nor vilified the prince nor the people: their common calamities he ascribes to inevitable causes, which had been long working those changes independent of either. In the reigns of James and Charles, according to his favorite principle, "the English Balance," in favor of "popularity," was "running like a bowl down hill." He does justice to the sagacity of the indolent James, who, he tells us, "not seldom prophesied sad things to his successors;" and of Charles the First, on succeeding to his father, Harrington has expressed himself with the utmost political wisdom, and felicity of illustration: "There remained nothing to the destruction of a monarchy, retaining but the name, more than a prince, who, by contending, should make the people to feel those advantages which they could not see.

And this happened to the next king (Charles), who, too secure in that undoubted right whereby he was advanced to the throne which had no foundation, dared to put this to an unseasonable trial, on whom, therefore, fell the tower in Silo. Nor may we think they on whom this tower fell were sinners above all men; but that we, unless we repent and look better to the true foundations, must likewise perish."* All that our philosopher had to deliver to the world on the many contested points of that unhappy reign was the illustration of his principle, and not the infamy of vulgar calumny. With the philosophic Harrington, Charles the First was but "a doomed man;" not more a sinner, because the tower of Silo had fallen upon his head, than those who stood without. This was true philosophy: the other was faction.

The treatise on "the Grounds and Reasons of Monarchy," prominently placed at the opening of the works of Harrington, and inseparably combined with his opinions by the reference in the general index, — this treatise, which has settled like a gangrene on the fair character of the author of "Oceana," which has called down on his devoted head the execrations of honorable men,† and which has misled many generations of readers, is the composition of a salaried party writer, in no way connected with our author. Toland, the first editor of Harrington's works, introduced into the volume this anonymous invective, which has thus come down to us sanctioned by the philosopher's name. There was no plea of any connection between the two authors, and much less between their writings. The editor of the edition of 1771 has silently introduced the name of the real author in the table of contents, but without prefixing it to the tract, or without any further indication to inform the reader.

Whether zeal for "the cause" led Toland to this editorial

* The Art of Law-giving, 366, 4to edition.

† See the solemn denunciations of the "Biographia Britannica," p. 2536, which are repeated by later biographers; see Chalmers.

delinquency, or whether he fell into this inadvertence from deficient acumen, it remains a literary calamity not easily paralleled; for a great author is condemned for what he never could have written.

THE AUTHOR OF "THE GROUNDS AND REASONS OF MONARCHY."

THE author of "the Grounds and Reasons of Monarchy," whose historical libel is perpetuated in the works of Harrington, is JOHN HALL, of Gray's Inn, sometimes described of Durham; one of those fervid spirits who take the bent of the times in a revolutionary period. He must be classed among those precocious minds which astonish their contemporaries by acquisitions of knowledge, combined with the finest genius, and in their boyhood betray no immaturity. We may receive with some suspicion accounts of such gifted youths, though they come from competent judges; but when we are reminded of the Rowley of Chatterton, and find what HALL did, we must conclude that there are meteorous beings, whose eccentric orbits we know not how to describe. HALL, prevented by the civil wars from entering the university, pursued his studies in the privacy of the library at Durham. When the war ceased, he was admitted at Cambridge; and in 1646 published, in his nineteenth year, *Horæ Vacivæ*, or "Essays, with some Occasional Considerations." These are essays in prose; and, at a time when our literature could boast of none except the masterpieces of Lord Bacon, a boy of nineteen sends forth this extraordinary volume. Even our plain Anthony caught the rapture; for he describes its appearance, "the sudden breaking-forth of which amazed not only the university, but the more serious part of men in the three nations, when they (the Essays) were spread." Here is the

puerility of a genius of the first order! A boy's essays raised the admiration of "the three nations"! and they remain still remarkable! This youth seems to have modelled his manner on Bacon for the turn of his thoughts, and on Seneca for the point and sparkle of his periods. The dwarf rose strong as a giant.*

The boy, having astonished the world by a volume of his prose, amazed them in the succeeding year by a volume of his verse, poetry as graceful as the prose was nervous: his verses still adorn the most elegant of our modern anthologies.†

Attracted to the metropolis, he entered as a student at Gray's Inn; and there his political character soon assumed the supremacy over his literary. He sided with the independents, the ultra commonwealth-men; and satirized the presbyterians, the friends of monarchy. He plunged into extreme measures: courting his new masters by the baseness of a busy pen, he justified Barebones's parliament; got up a state-pamphlet against the Hollanders; proposed the reform of the universities, "to have the friar-like list of the fellowships *reduced*, and *the rest of the revenue* of the university *sequestered into the hands of the committee*," of which, probably, he might himself have been one. The exchequer was opened; he received "present sums of money;" and the council granted their scribe a considerable pension.

During this life of political activity, Hall, in 1650, was commanded by the council of state to repair to Scotland, to attend on Cromwell, for the purpose of settling affairs in favor of the commonwealth, and to wean the Scots from their lingering affection for the surviving Stuart. It was then that Hall, in his vocation, sent forth the thunder of a party-pamphlet, — "the Grounds and Reasons of Monarchy." This extraordinary tract consists of two parts: the first, more elaborately

* Three or four of these Essays have been reprinted in "the Restituta," vol. iii. The original book is very rare.

† See Ellis's "Specimens."

composed, is an argumentative exposition of anti-monarchical doctrines; in the second, to bring the business home to their bosoms, he offers a demonstration of his principles, in a review of the whole Scottish history, sarcastically reminding them of their kings "crowned with happy reigns, and quiet deaths (two successively scarce dying naturally)." It is a mass of invectives and calumnies in the disguise of grave history, and this historical libel, concocted for a particular time and a particular place, was eagerly received at Edinburgh, and immediately republished in London, where it was sure of as warm a reception.*

Hall's passion for literature must have been intense; for, amid these discordant days, he found time to glide into hours of refreshing studies. He gave us the first vernacular version of "the Sublime" of Longinus,† and left another of the moral Hierocles. This gifted youth with sportive facility turned English into Latin, or Latin into English: it has been recorded of him that he translated the greater part of a singular work of the alchemical Maier, in one afternoon, over his wine at a tavern; and he entranced the ear of that universal patron, Edward Bendlowes, by turning into Latin verse three hundred lines of his mystical poem of "Theophila," at one sitting.

In this impassioned existence, excited by the acrimony of politics and the enthusiasm of study, he fell into reckless dissipation, and undermined a constitution, which, probably, had all the delicacy and sensitiveness of his genius. He sunk in the struggle of celebrity and personal indulgence, and hastened

* I found the origin of this eloquent and factious performance in an account of JOHN HALL, prefixed to his translation of "Hierocles on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras:" it proceeds from a friend, — John Davies of Kidwelly. The treatise of Hall, in its original edition, is so rare, that no copy has been found at the British Museum, nor in the King's Library: it was, however, reprinted at the time in London.

† "A piece of great learning, entitled 'the Height of Eloquence,' written in Greek, by Dionysius Longinus; rendered into English from the original, by John Hall, Esq., London, 1652, 8vo." — *Brüggeman's English Transactions.*

back to his family to die, when he had hardly attained to manhood.

A true prodigy of genius was this JOHN HALL; for not only he could warm into admiration our literary antiquary, but the greater philosopher Hobbes, not prone to flattery, has left a memorial of this impassioned and precocious being. "Had not his debauches and intemperance diverted him from the more severe studies, he had made an extraordinary person; for no man had ever done so great things at his age."

COMMONWEALTH.

When the term Commonwealth deeply occupied the minds of men, they had formed no settled notions about the thing itself: the term became equivocal, of such wide signification that it was misunderstood and misapplied, and always ambiguous; and a confusion of words led many writers into a confusion of notions.

The term *Commonweal*, or *wealth*, indeed, appears in our statutes, in the speeches of our monarchs, and in the political works of our writers, long before the idea of a *republic*, in its popular sense, was promulgated by the votaries of democracy. The term *Commonweal* explains itself: it specifies no particular polity but the public weal; and even the term *republic* originally meant nothing more than *res publicæ*, or "the affairs of the public." Sir Thomas Smith, the learned secretary to Elizabeth, who has written on the English constitution, entitles his work, "the Commonwealth of England." James the First justly called himself "the great servant of the Commonwealth." The Commonwealth, meaning the kingdom of England, is the style of all the learned in law.

The ambiguity of the term *Commonwealth* soon caused it to be perverted by the advocates of popular government, who do not distinguish the State from the people: this appears as early as the days of Rawleigh, who tells us that "the government of all the common and baser sort is, by an *usurped nickname*, called a Commonwealth."*

* Rawleigh's "Remains."

It was in the revolutionary period of Charles the First that the terms *Commonwealth* and *Commonwealth-man* were adopted by the governing party, as precisely describing their purity of devotion to the public weal. In the temper of the times, the Commonwealth became opposed to the monarchy, and the Commonwealth-man to the royalist. Cromwell ironically asked what was a Commonwealth; affecting an ignorance of the term.

When Baxter wrote his "Holy Commonwealth" against Harrington's "Heathenish Commonwealth," he had said, "I plead the cause of monarchy as better than democracy or aristocracy." Toland, a Commonwealth-man in the new sense, referring to Baxter's work, exclaims that "a monarchy is an odd way of modelling a Commonwealth." Baxter alluded to an English Commonwealth in its primitive sense, and Toland restricted the term to its modern application. Indeed, Toland exults in the British constitution being a Commonwealth in the popular sense, in his preface to his edition of Harrington's works; and has the merit of bringing forward as his authority the royal name of James the First, and which afterwards seems to have struck Locke as so apposite, that he condescended to repeat it. The passage in Toland is curious: "It is undeniably manifest that the English government is *already a Commonwealth* the most free and best constituted in the world. This was *frankly* acknowledged by King James the First, who styled himself *the great servant of the Commonwealth*." One hardly suspected a republican of gravely citing the authority of the royal sage on any position!

The Restoration made the term *Commonwealth-man* odious, as marking out a class of citizens in hostility to the government; and *Commonwealth* seems, in any sense, to have long continued such an offensive word, that it required the nicest delicacy to handle it. The use of the term has even drawn an apology from Locke himself, when writing on "government." "By Commonwealth," says our philosophical politi-

cian, "I must be understood all along to mean, *not a democracy*, but an independent community, which the Latins signified by *civitas;* to which the word which best answers in our language is *Commonwealth.*" However, Locke does not close his sentence without some trepidation for the use of an unequivocal term, obnoxious even under the new monarchy of the revolution. "To avoid ambiguity, I crave leave to use the word *Commonwealth* in that sense in which I find it *used by King James the First*, and I take it to be its genuine signification; which *if anybody dislike, I consent with him to change it for a better*"! An ample apology! but one which hardly suits the dignity of the philosophical writer.

THE TRUE INTELLECTUAL SYSTEM OF THE UNIVERSE.

It is only in the silence of seclusion that we should open the awful tome of "the True Intellectual System of the Universe" of Ralph Cudworth.* The history and the fate of this extraordinary result of human knowledge and of sublime metaphysics are not the least remarkable in the philosophy of bibliography.

The first intention of the author of this elaborate and singular work was a simple inquisition into the nature of that metaphysical necessity, or destiny, which has been introduced into the systems both of philosophy and religion, wherein man is left an irresponsible agent in his actions, and is nothing more than the blind instrument of inevitable events over which he holds no control.

This system of "necessity," or fate, our inquirer traced to three different systems, maintained on distinct principles. The ancient Democritic or atomical physiology endows inert matter with a motive power. It views a creation, and a continued creation, without a creator. The disciple of this system is as one who cannot read; who would only perceive lines and scratches in the fairest volume, while the more learned comprehend its large and legible characters: in the mighty volume of Nature, the *mind* discovers what the *sense* may not, and reads "those sensible delineations, by its own

* My copy is the folio volume of the first edition, 1678; but they have recently reprinted Cudworth at Oxford in four volumes.

inward activity," which wisdom and power have with their divinity written on every page. The absurd system of the atomist, or the mere materialist, Cudworth names the atheistic.

The second system of "necessity" is that of the theists, who conceive that the will of the Deity, producing in us good or evil, is determined by no immutability of goodness and justice, but an arbitrary will omnipotent; and therefore all qualities, good and evil, are merely so by our own conventional notions, having no reality in nature. And this, Cudworth calls *the divine fate*, or *immoral theism*, being a religion divesting the Creator of the intellectual and moral government of the universe; all just and unjust, according to this hypothesis, being mere factitious things. This "necessity" seems the predestination of Calvinism, with the immorality of Antinomianism.

The third sort of fatalists do not deny the moral attributes of the Deity, in his nature essentially benevolent and just; therefore there is an immutability in natural justice and morality, distinct from any law or arbitrary custom: but, as these theists are necessarians, the human being is incapacitated to receive praise or blame, rewards or punishments, or to become the object of retributive justice; whence they deduce their axiom, that nothing could possibly have been otherwise than it is.

To confute these three fatalisms, or false hypotheses of the system of the universe, Cudworth designed to dedicate three great works, — one against atheism, another against immoral theism, and the third against the theism whose doctrine was the inevitable "necessity" which determined all actions and events, and deprived man of his free agency.

These licentious systems were alike destructive of social virtues; and our ethical metaphysician sought to trace the Deity as an omnipotent understanding Being, a supreme Intelligence presiding over all, in his own nature unchangeable

and eternal, but granting to his creatures their choice of good and evil by an immutable morality. In the system of the visible and corporeal world, the sage contemplated on the mind which everywhere pervaded it; and his genius launched forth into the immensity of "the Intellectual System of the Universe."

In this comprehensive design, he maintains that the ancients had ever preserved the idea of one Supreme Being, distinct from all other gods. That multitude of pagan deities, poetical and political, were but the polyonomy, or the many names or attributes, of one God, in which the unity of the Divine Being was recognized. In the deified natures of things, the intelligent worshipped God, — the creator in the created. The pagan religion, however erroneous, was not altogether nonsensical, as the atheists would represent it.

In this folio of near a thousand pages, Cudworth opens the occult sources of remote antiquity; and all the knowledge which the most recondite records have transmitted are here largely dispersed. There is no theogony and no cosmogony which remains unexplored: the Chaldean oracles, and the Hermaic books, and the Trismegistic writings, are laid open for us; the arcane theology of the Egyptians is unveiled; and we may consult the Persian Zoroaster, the Grecian Orpheus, the mystical Pythagoras, and the allegorizing Plato. No poet was too imaginative, no sophist was too obscure, to be allowed to rest in the graves of their oblivion. All are here summoned to meet together, as at the last tribunal of their judgment-day. And they come with their own words on their lips, and they commune with us with their own voices, for this great magician of mind, who had penetrated into the recesses of mythic antiquity to descry its dim and uncertain truths, has recorded their own words with the reverence of a votary to their faiths. "The sweetness of philology allays the severity of philosophy; the main thing, in the mean time,

being the philosophy of religion.* But, for our parts, we neither call Philology nor yet Philosophy our mistress, but serve ourselves of either as occasion requireth." Such are the words of the historian of "the Intellectual System of the Universe."

It is this mine of recondite quotations in their original languages, most accurately translated, which has imparted such an enduring value to this treasure of the ancient theology, philosophy, and literature:† for however subtle and logical was the master-mind which carried on his trains of reasoning, its abstract and abstruse nature could not fail to prove repulsive to the superficial; for few could follow the genius who led them into "the very darkest recesses of antiquity," while his passionless sincerity was often repugnant to the narrow creed of the orthodox. What, therefore, could the consequence of this elaborate volume, when given to the world, be, but neglect or hatred? And long was "the Intellectual System" lost among a thoughtless or incurious race of readers. It appeared in 1678. It was nearly thirty years afterwards, when the neglected author was no more, in 1703, that Le Clerc, a great reader of English writers, furnished copious extracts in his "Bibliothèque Choisie," which introduced it to the knowledge of foreigners, and provoked a keen controversy with Bayle. This last great critic, who could only decide by the translated extracts, proved to be a formidable antagonist of Cudworth. At length, in 1733, more than half a century subsequent to its publication, Mosheim gave a Latin version, with learned illustrations. The translation was not made

* A remarkable expression, which we supposed was peculiar to the more enlarged views of our own age. But who can affix precise notions to general terms? Cudworth's notion of "the philosophy of religion" was probably restricted to the history of the ancient philosophies of religion.

† In the first edition, the *references* of its numerous quotations were few and imperfect: Dr. Birch, in the edition of 1743, supplied those that were wanting from Mosheim's Latin translation of the work. Warburton observed that "all the translations from the Greek are wonderfully exact."

without great difficulty; and a French one, which had been begun, was abandoned. Cudworth has invented many terms, compound or obscure; and though these may be traced to their sources, yet, when a single novel term may allude to metaphysical notions or to recondite knowledge, the learning is less to be admired than the defective perspicacity is to be regretted. It was, however, this edition of a foreigner which awakened the literary ardor of the author's countrymen towards their neglected treasure; and, in 1743, "the True Intellectual System" at length reached a second edition, republished by Birch.*

The seed of immortal thoughts are not sown to perish, even in the loose soil where they have long lain disregarded. "The Intellectual System" has furnished many writers with their secondary erudition, and possibly may have given rise to that portion of "the Divine Legation" of Warburton whose ancient learning we admire for its ingenuity, while we retreat from its paradoxes; for there is this difference between this solid and that fanciful erudition, — that Warburton has proudly made his subject full of himself, while Cudworth was earnest only to be full of his subject. The glittering edifice of Paradox was raised on movable sands; but the more awful temple has been hewn out of rocks which time can never displace. Even in our own days, Dugald Stewart has noticed that some German systems, stripped of their deep neological disguise, have borrowed from Cudworth their most valuable materials. The critical decision of Leibnitz must not, however, be rejected; for, if there is some severity in its

* It may be regretted that this valuable mass of curious erudition is not furnished with an ordinary index. A singular clew to the labyrinth the author has offered, by a running head on every single one of the thousand pages; and a minutely analytical table of the contents is appended to the mighty tome. This indeed impresses us with a full conception of the sublimity of the work itself; but our intimacy with this multitude of matters is greatly interrupted by the want of a ready reference to particulars which an ordinary index would have afforded.

truth, there is truth in its severity. "Dans 'Le Système Intellectuel' je trouve beaucoup de savoir, mais non pas assez de méditation."

Such is the great work of a great mind! We have already shown its hard fate in the neglect of the contemporaries of the author, — that thoughtless and thankless world many a great writer is doomed to address; and we must now touch on those human infirmities to which all systems of artificial theology and speculative notions are unhappily obnoxious.

In stating the arguments of the atheists at full, and opposing those of their adversaries, this true inquirer suffered the odium of Atheism itself! "It is pleasant enough," says Lord Shaftesbury, "that the pious Cudworth was accused of giving the upper hand to the atheist for having only stated their reasons and those of their adversaries fairly together." The truth seems, that our learned and profound author was not orthodox in his notions. To explain the difficulty of the resurrection of bodies which in death resolve themselves into their separate elements, Cudworth assumed that they would not appear in their substance as a body of flesh, but in some ethereal form. In his researches he discovered the Trinity of Plato, of Pythagoras, and of Parmenides, and that of the Persian Mithra of three Hypostases, numerically distinct, in the unity of the Godhead: this spread an alarm among his brothers the clergy, and Cudworth was perpetually referred to as an unquestionable authority by the heterodox writers on the mystery of the Christian Trinity. Even his great principle, that the Unity of the Deity was known to the polytheists, was impugned by a catholic divine as derogatory of revelation; he insisting that the Pagan divinities were only a commemoration of human beings. Yet the notion of Cudworth, so amply illustrated, was not peculiar to him; for it had already been promulgated by Lord Herbert, and by the ancients themselves.

As all such results contradicted received opinions, this

pious and learned man was condemned by some as "an Arian, a Socinian, or at best a Deist." Some praised his prudence, while others intimated his dissimulation: on several dogmas he delivers himself with great reserve, and even so ambiguously, that his own opinions are not easily ascertained, and are sometimes even contradictory. There have been more recent philosophers, who, from their prejudices, have hardly done justice to the search for truth of Cudworth: he is depreciated by Lord Bolingbroke, who, judging the philosopher by the color of his coat, has treated the divine with his keenest severity, as "one who read too much to think enough, and admired too much to think freely." Bolingbroke might envy the learning which he could not rival, and borrow from those recondite stores the knowledge which otherwise might not have reached him.

Our great author had, indeed, the heel of Achilles. Exercising the most nervous logic and the most subtle metaphysics, he was also deeply imbued with Platonic reveries. Ambitious, in his inquiries, to discuss subjects placed far beyond the reach of human faculties, he delighted, with his eager imagination, to hover about those impassable precincts which Providence and Nature have eternally closed against the human footstep. It was this disposition of his mind which gave birth to the wild hypothesis of *the plastic life of Nature*, to unfold the inscrutable operations of Providence in the changeless forms of existence. There is nothing more embarrassing to atheism, in deriving the uninterrupted phenomena of Nature from a fortuitous mechanism of inert matter, than to be compelled to ascribe the unvaried formation of animals to a cause which has no idea of what it performs, although its end denotes an intention; executing an undeviating system without any intelligence of the laws which govern it. We cannot indeed conceive every mite or gnat or fly to be the immediate handwork of the ceaseless labors of the Deity; though so perfectly artificial is even its wing or its

leg, that the Divine Artificer seems visible in the minutest production. Cudworth, to solve the enigma, fancifully concluded that the Deity had given a plastic faculty to matter, — "a vital and spiritual, but unintelligent and necessary, agent to execute its purposes." He raised up a sort of middle substance between matter and spirit, — it seemed both or neither: and our philosopher, roving through the whole creation, sometimes describes it as an inferior subordinate agent of the Deity, doing the drudgery, without consciousness; lower than animal life; a kind of drowsy unawakened mind, not knowing, but only doing according to commands and laws impressed upon it.

The consequence deduced by the subtle Bayle from this fanciful system was, that, had the Deity ever given such a plastic faculty, it was an evidence that it is not repugnant to the nature of things, that unintelligent and necessary agents should operate, and therefore a motive power might be essential to matter, and things thus might exist of themselves.* It weakened the great objection against atheism. Philosophers, to extricate themselves from occult phenomena, have too often flung over the gaping chasms which they cannot fill up, the slight plank of a vague conjecture, or have constructed the temporary bridge of an artificial hypothesis; and thus they have hazarded what yields no sure footing. Of this "folly of the wise," the inexplicable ether of Newton, the whirling worlds or vortices of Descartes, and the vibrations and the vibratiuncles of Hartley, among so many similar fancies of other philosophers, furnish a memorable evidence. The *plastic life of Nature*, as explained by Cudworth, only substituted a novel term for a blind, unintelligent agent, and could neither endure the ridicule of Bolingbroke nor the logic of Bayle, and is thrown aside among the deceitful fancies of scholastic dreamers.

* Continuation des Pensées Diverses, iii. 90.

There was indeed, from his earliest days, a tinge of Platonic refinement in the capacious understanding of this great metaphysician. The theses he maintained at college were the dawn of the genius of his future works. One was on "the Eternal Differences between Good and Evil," which probably led long after to his treatise on "Eternal and Immutable Morality," — an exposition of the dangerous doctrines of Hobbes and the Antinomians.* The other question he disputed was, that "there are incorporeal substances immortal in their own nature," — a topic he afterwards investigated in "the True Intellectual System of the Universe," against the principles of the Epicurean philosophy. These scholastic exercises are an evidence that the youthful student was already shaping in his mind the matters and the subjects of his future great work. Beautiful is this unity of mind which we discover in every master-genius! Even into his divinity he seems to have carried the same fanciful refinement: he maintained that "the Lord's Supper was a feast upon a sacrifice;" and such was the charm of this mysterious doctrine, that it was adopted by some of the greatest divines and scholars. It is not therefore surprising that Cudworth was held in the highest estimation by the Platonic Dr. More, of which I give a remarkable instance. Cudworth, as other divines, wrote on Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks, which, he says in a letter, is "a Defence of Christianity against Judaism; the seventy weeks never having yet been sufficiently cleared and improved." Since the days of Cudworth, others have "cleared and improved," and his "demonstration" is not even noticed among subsequent "demonstrations;" but Judaism still remains. Yet, on this theological revery, Dr. More has used this forcible language: "Mr. Cudworth has demonstrated the manifestation of the

* This volume, still read and valued, was fortunately saved amidst the wreck of the author's manuscripts, and was published, from his own autograph copy which he had prepared for the press, so late as 1781, 8vo.

Messiah to have fallen out at the end of the sixty-ninth week, and his passion in the midst of the seventieth. This demonstration is of as much price and worth in theology as either the circulation of the blood in physic, or the motion of the earth in natural philosophy." This is not only a curious instance of the argumentative theology of that period, but of the fascination of a most refining genius influencing kindred imaginations.

We now come to record the melancholy fate of this great work in connection with its great author. He had arranged it into three elaborate volumes; but we possess only the first, — the refutation of atheism: that subject, however, is of itself complete. Although I know not any private correspondence of Cudworth, after the publication of "the Intellectual System," which might more positively reveal the state of his feelings, and the cause of the suppression of his work, in which he had made considerable progress, yet we are acquainted with circumstances which too clearly describe its unhappy fate. We learn from Warburton, that this pious and learned scholar was the victim of calumny; and that, too sensitive to his injuries, he grew disgusted with his work: his ardor slackened, and the mass of his papers lay in cold neglect. The philosophical divine participated in the fate of the few, who, like him, searched for truth freed from the manacles of received opinions.

Cudworth left his manuscripts to the care of his daughter, Lady Masham, the friend of Locke, who passed his latter days in her house at Oates. Her ladyship was literary, but the reverse of a Platonical genius: she wrote against the Platonic Norris's "Love of God," and admitted in her religion no principles which were not practicable in morals; and seems to have been rather the disciple of the author of "the Human Understanding" than the daughter of the author of "the Intellectual System." For the good sense of Lady Masham, erudition lost its curiosity, and imagination its charm;

and she probably with some had certain misgivings of the tendency of her father's writings! He had himself been careless of them; for we know of no testamentary direction for their preservation. By her these unvalued manuscripts were not placed in a cabinet, but thrown in a heap into the dark corner of some neglected shelf in the library at Oates; and from thence, after the lapse of half a century, they were turned out, with some old books, by the last Lord Masham, to make room for a fashionable library for his second lady. A bookseller purchased them, with a notion that this waste paper contained the writings of Locke; and, printing a Bible under the editorship of the famous Dr. Dodd, introduced the Scripture notes, found among the heap, in the commentary, under the name of Locke. The papers were accidentally discovered to be parts of "the Intellectual System;" and, after having suffered mutilation and much confusion in the various mischances which they passed through, they finally repose among our national collections, — fragments on fragments which may yet be inspected by those whose intrepidity would patiently venture on the discoveries which lie amid this mass of theological metaphysics. They are thus described in Ayscough's "Catalogue," 4983: — "Collection of Confused Thoughts, Memorandums, &c., relating to the Eternity of Torments, — Thoughts on Pleasure, — Commonplace Book of Motives to Moral Duties, two volumes; and five volumes on Free-will." This description is imperfect; and many other subjects, the groundwork of his future inquiries, will be found in these voluminous manuscripts. One volume, still highly valued, was snatched from the wreck, — Cudworth's "Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality," which was edited by Dr. Chandler many years after the death of the author.

After all, we possess a mighty volume, subject no longer to neglect nor to mischance. "The True Intellectual System of the Universe" exists without a parallel for its matter, its

subject, and its manner. Its matter furnishes the unsunned treasures of ancient knowledge, the history of the thoughts, the imaginations, and the creeds, of the profoundest intellects of mankind on the Deity. Its subject, though veiled in metaphysics more sublime than human reasoning can pierce, yet shows enough for us to adore; and its manner, brightened by a subdued Platonism, inculcates the immutability of moral distinctions, and vindicates the free agency of the human being against the impious tenets which deliver him over a blind captive to an inexorable "necessity."

DIFFICULTIES OF THE PUBLISHERS OF CONTEMPORARY MEMOIRS.

THE editors of contemporary memoirs have often suffered an impenetrable mystery to hang over their publications by an apparent suppression of the original. By this studious evasion of submitting the manuscript to public inspection, they long diminished the credit of the printed volumes. Enemies whose hostility the memorialists had raised up, in the mean while practised every artifice of detraction, racking their invention to persuade the world that but little faith was due to these pretended revelations; while the editors, mute and timorous, from private motives which they wished to conceal, dared not explain, in their lifetime, the part which they had really taken in editing these works. In the course of years, circumstances often became too complicated to be disentangled, or were of too delicate a nature to be nakedly exposed to the public scrutiny; the accusations grew more confident, the defence more vague, the suspicions more probable, the rumors and the hearsays more prevalent: the public confidence in the authenticity of these contemporary memoirs was thus continually shaken.

Such has been the fate of the "History" of the Earl of Clarendon, which, during a long interval of time, had to contend with prudential editors and its perfidious opponents; and it is only at this late day that we are enabled to draw the veil from the mystery of its publication, and to reconcile the contradictory statements so positively alleged by the assertors

of the integrity of the text and the impugners of its genuineness. We now can adjust with certainty so many vague protestations of its authenticity, by those who could not themselves have known it, with the sceptical cavils which at times seemed not always doubtful, and with one infamous charge which was not less positive than it proved to be utterly fictitious. The fate and character of this great historical work was long involved in the most intricate and obscure incidents; and this bibliographical tale offers a striking illustration of the disingenuity alike of the assailants and the defenders.

The "History" of Lord CLARENDON was composed by the express desire of Charles the First. This prince, in the midst of his fugitive and troubled life, seemed still regardful of posterity; and we might think, were it not too flattering to his judgment, that, by his selection of this historian, he anticipated the genius of an immortal writer. We know the king carefully conveyed to the noble author many historical documents, to furnish this vindication, or apology, of the calamitous measures to which that fated sovereign was driven. The earnest performance of this design, fervid with the eloquence of the writer, proceeding on such opposite principles to those of the advocates of popular freedom, and bearing on its awful front the condemnatory title of "the Rebellion," provoked their indignant feelings; and, from its first appearance, they attempted to blast its credit by sinking it into a mere party production. But the elevated character of "the Chancellor of Human Nature," as Warburton emphatically described him, stood almost beyond the reach of his assailants: it was by a circuitous attack that they contrived to depreciate the work by pointing their assault on the presumed editors of the posthumous "History." And though the genius of the historian, and the peculiarity of his style, could not but be apparent through the whole of this elaborate work, yet rumors soon gathered from various quarters, that the text had been tampered with by "the Oxford editors;" and some, judging by

the preface, and the heated and party dedication to the queen, which, it has been asserted, afterwards induced the Tory frenzy of Sacheverell, imagined that the editors had converted the "History" into a vehicle of their own passions. The "History" of Clarendon was declared to be mutilated, interpolated, and, at length, even forged: the taint of suspicion long weakened the confidence of general readers. Even Warburton suspected that the editors had taken the liberty of omitting passages; but, with a reliance on their honor, he believed they had never dared to incorporate any additions of their own.

The "History" of Lord CLARENDON thus, from its first appearance, was attended by the concomitant difficulties of contemporary history, as we shall find the editors soon discovered when they sat down to their task; difficulties which occasioned their peculiar embarrassments. Even the noble author himself had considered that "a piece of this nature, wherein the infirmities of some, and the malice of others, both things and persons, must be boldly looked upon and mentioned, is not likely to appear in the age in which it was written." Lord Clarendon seems to have been fully aware, that the freedom of the historical pen is equally displeasing to all parties. A contemporary historian is doomed to the peculiar unhappiness of encountering living witnesses; prompt to challenge the correctness of his details, and the fairness of his views: for him the complaints of friends will not be less unreasonable than the clamors of foes. And this happened to the present work. The "History" was not only assailed by men of a party, but by men of a family. They whose relatives had immolated their persons, and wrecked their fortunes, by their allegiance to the royal cause, were mortified by the silence of the historian: the writer was censured for omissions which had never entered into his design; for he was writing less a general history of the civil war, than a particular one of "the Rebellion," as he deemed it. Others eagerly protested against the misrepresentation of the characters of their ancestors; but, as all family

feelings are in reality personal ones, such interested accusers may not be less partial and prejudiced than the contemporary historian himself. He, at least, should be allowed to possess the advantage of a more immediate knowledge of what he narrates, and the right of that free opinion, which deprived of, he would cease to be "the servant of posterity." Lord Lansdowne was indignant at the severity of the military portrait of his ancestor, Sir Richard Greenvill, and has left a warm apology to palliate a conduct which Clarendon had honestly condemned; and recently the late Earl of Ashburnham wrote two agreeable volumes to prove that Clarendon was jealous of the royal favor which the feeble Ashburnham enjoyed, and to which the descendant ascribed the depreciation of that favorite's character.

The authenticity of the "History" soon became a subject of national attention. The passions of the two great factions which ruled our political circles had broken forth from these kindling pages of the recent history of their own day. They were treading on ashes which covered latent fires. Whenever a particular sentence raised the anger of some, or a provoking epithet for ever stuck to a favorite personage, the offended parties were willing to believe that these might be interpolations; for it was positively affirmed that such there were. Twenty years after its first publication, we find Sir Joseph Jekyl, in the House of Commons, solemnly declaring that he had reason to believe that the "History of the Rebellion" had not been printed faithfully.

An incident of a very singular nature had occurred, even before the publication of the "History," which assuredly was unknown to the editors. Dr. Calamy, the historian of the nonconformists, at the time that Lord Clarendon's "History" was printing at Oxford, was himself on the point of publishing his "Narrative" of Baxter, and was anxious to ascertain the statements of his lordship on certain matters which entered into his own "History." This astute divine, with something

of the cunning of the serpent, whatever might be his dovelike innocence, hit upon an extraordinary expedient, by submitting the dignity of his order to pass through a most humiliating process. The crafty doctor posted to Oxford; and there, cautiously preserving the incognito, after ingratiating himself into the familiarity of the waiter, and then of the perruquier, he succeeded in procuring a secret communication with one of the printers. The good man exults in the wonders which sometimes may be opened to us by what he terms "a silver key rightly applied." The doctor had invented the treason, and now had only to seek for the traitor. A faithless workman supplied him with a sight of all the sheets printed; and, with a still grosser violation of the honor of the craft, exposed the naked manuscript itself to the prying eyes of the critical dissenter. To the honor of Clarendon, as far as concerned Calamy's narrative, there was no disagreement; but the aspect of the manuscript puzzled the learned doctor. It appeared not to be the original, but a transcript, wherein he observed "alterations and interlineations:" paragraphs were struck out, and insertions added. Here seemed an important discovery, not likely to remain buried in the breast of the historian of the nonconformists; and he gradually let it out among his literary circle. The appearance of the manuscript fully warranted the conviction, of him who was not unwilling to believe, that the "History" of Clarendon had been moulded by the hands of those dignitaries of Oxford who were supposed to be the real editors. The "History" was soon called, in contempt, "the Oxford History." The earliest rumors of a corrupt text probably originated in this quarter; as it is now certain, since the confession of Dr. Calamy appears in his diary, that he was the first who had discovered the extraordinary state of the manuscript.

Some inaccuracies, great negligence of dates, certain apparent contradictions, and some imperfect details, — often occasioned by the noble emigrant's distant retirements, deprived,

as we now know, of his historical collections, — did not tend to dissipate the prevalent suspicions. The manuscript was frequently called for; but, on inquiry, it was not found in the Bodleian Library: it was said to be locked up in a box deposited in the library of the Earl of Rochester, who had died since the publication. Sometimes they heard of a transcript, and sometimes of an original: it was reported that the autograph work by Lord Clarendon, among other valuables, had been destroyed in the fire of the Earl of Rochester's house at New Park. The inquirers became more importunate in their demands, and more clamorous in their expostulations.

About this period, Oldmixon, one of the renowned of the "Dunciad," stepped forth as a political adventurer in history. He enlisted on the popular side; he claimed the honors of the most devoted patriotism: but in what degree he may have merited these will best appear when we shall more intimately discover the man himself. Oldmixon had wholly engaged with a party; and, being an industrious hand, had assigned to himself a good deal of work. Preparatory to his copious "History" of the Stuarts, he had preluded by two smaller works his "Critical History of England," and his "Clarendon and Whitelocke Compared." He had repeatedly insinuated his suspicions, that the "History of the Rebellion" was not the entire work of Clarendon; but the more formal attack, by specifying the falsified passages, at length appeared in the preface to his "History" of the Stuarts. The subject of the genuineness of Clarendon's text had so long engaged public discussion, that it evidently induced this writer to particularize it, among other professed discoveries, on his extensive title-page, as one not the least likely to invite the eager curiosity of his readers. The heavy charge was here announced to be at length brought to a positive demonstration. We perceive the writer's complacency, when with an air of triumph he declared, "To all which is prefixed some account of the

liberties taken with Clarendon's History *before it came to the press*, — such liberties as make it doubtful what part of it is Clarendon's, and what not."

It is here we find the anonymous communication of "a gentleman of distinction;" who was soon known to be Col. Ducket, an M.P., and a Commissioner of the Excise. The colonel details a conversation with Edmund Smith, the poet, who died at his seat, that "there had been a fine 'History' written by Lord Clarendon: but what was published under his name was patchwork, and might as properly be called the 'History' of the deans Aldrich, Smalridge, and Atterbury; for to his knowledge it was altered, and he himself was employed to interpolate the original." In a copy of the "History," Smith had scored numerous passages of this sort, and particularly the famous one of Cinna, which had been applied to the character of Hampden.

We may conceive the sensation produced by this apparently authenticated tale. Oldmixon in triumph confirms it, too, from another quarter; for he appeals to "a reverend divine now living, who saw the Oxford copy by which the book was printed, altered, and interpolated." This divine was our Dr. Calamy, who could not deny what he had truly affirmed.

The anonymous voucher for this extraordinary charge which appears in the preface was an after-thought of our historical scribe at the late hour of publication, when it must have occurred to him that the world would require the most positive testimony of such a foul forgery. It is remarkable that Oldmixon had already, in the body of his work, broadly embroidered the narrative. We may form some notion of the mode in which this impetuous writer composed history, blending his passions with his facts, by observing what he did in the present matter. In the text of his history, we discover the tale solemnly worked up into a tragic scene of penitential remorse on a death-bed; and, still farther to

appropriate and confirm the exciting narrative of this forgery, he had artfully bolstered it up by an accompanying anecdote. When Smith the poet had foisted in the description of Cataline (or Cinna, as it is erroneously written in Clarendon), one of the doctors slapped him on the back, exclaiming with an asseveration, "*It will do!*" And our historian proceeds: "The remorse he expressed for being concerned in this imposture were his last words." He then declares, that, in the highly finished portraits of Clarendon, "all likeness is lost in a barren superfluity of words, and the workings of a prejudiced imagination, where one may suppose the drawing was his own. But that there has been much daubing in some places, and more dirt in others, put in by his editors, is now incontestable. In those clumsy painters into whose hands his work fell, there is something so very false and base, that such coin could only come from a college mint." Thus inconsiderately, but not the less maliciously, Oldmixon filled his rapid page, and betrays his eagerness to snatch at any floating rumor or loose conversation, which he gives the world with the confidence, though he could not with the dignity, of historical truth. And it is this reckless abandonment of his pen in his post-haste and partial works of history which must ever weaken our trust in those more interesting portions for whose authority he refers to unknown manuscripts; and the more so, when we often detect his maimed and warped, and even interpolated, quotations; and, farther, recollect that Oldmixon stands himself a convicted criminal at the bar of history, having been detected in interpolating the historian Daniel when employed as editor by Kennet, which sunk the value of the first edition of that historical collection.

How was this positive and particularizing charge to be refuted? Years had elapsed, and Smith had never whispered such an important secret to any friend. The original manuscript had not yet appeared to confront the detractor, and to prove the fidelity of the editors. There are difficulties which

truth cannot always surmount. It is not only easier to raise a falsehood than to prove a truth, but it is possible that there may be accidents which may wholly prevent the discovery of truth. Of an accusation made years after the event, and the persons no longer in existence, we may never be enabled to remove the objections which it has succeeded in raising.

From this calamity the "History" of Clarendon had a narrow escape. All the parties concerned were no longer in life, save one, who seemed as much lost to the world, — Atterbury, forgotten in exile. The authenticity of the "History" of Clarendon was, however, the concern of literary Europe. Foreign journalists conveyed the astounding tale, assuring the literary exile, that, if he remained silent, the accusation must be considered as proved. The reply did not linger; for a simple fact demolished this inartificial fabric. Atterbury solemnly declared that he had never seen any manuscript of Lord Clarendon's "History;" that he believed he had never exchanged a word in his life with Smith, whose habitual conduct was too loose to tolerate; and, if that were true which Ducket had affirmed, that "Smith had died with a lie in his mouth." Atterbury added some new information respecting the real editors, who were Dean Aldrich and Bishop Sprat, and the late Earl of Rochester, the son of Lord Clarendon.

This unexpected confutation from the sole survivor of the accused parties revived the dismayed Clarendonians. The cards had changed; and these in their turn called for a sight of that copy of Clarendon said to have been scored by Smith. Oldmixon, baffled and mortified, appealed to his communicator; the most idle prevarications were alleged; and Col. Ducket even cavilled at the wording of the letter which Oldmixon had published. Both parties were anxious to fling the odium on the other; but neither had the honesty to retract the slander. We may believe that they were both convinced that the manuscript of Clarendon had been tampered with, but that neither could ascertain either the matter

or the manner. Ducket died during their embarrassment, and to his last day persisted in confirming his account, and even furnishing fresh particulars, as Oldmixon assures us.

In this extraordinary history of the fate of a disputed manuscript, which all had inquired after, and none had found, an incident occurred which put to rout Oldmixon and the numerous objectors to its authenticity. Seven books of the Clarendon manuscripts at length were discovered lodged in the custody of a lawyer in Bartlett's Buildings, Holborn, who was one of the executors of the second Earl of Clarendon; and, to the utter dismay of Oldmixon, the often-controverted passage of Hampden was to be seen in the original writing of the noble author. Several distinguished personages were admitted to consult the autograph: but when others applied, who came formally armed with an autograph letter of Lord Clarendon, to compare the writing with the manuscript, the lawyer was alarmed at the hostile investigation, and cautiously evaded an inspection by these eager inquirers; perhaps judging, that, whatever might be the consequence, the trouble was certain.

Oldmixon, in his last distress, persisted in declaring that he was not bound to trust in the genuineness of a manuscript of which he was refused the examination. It must be acknowledged, that any partial view of the Clarendon manuscript, seen by a few, was not sufficient to establish its authority with the public; and certainly till the recent edition by Dr. Bandinel appeared, admirably collated, the aspersions and surmises of the objectors to its genuineness had by no means been removed, and, we may add, were not wholly unfounded.

This history of the great work of Lord Clarendon would be imperfect, did we not develop the real causes which so long continued to obscure the inquiry, and involve its mysterious publication in the most perplexing intricacy.

Lord Clarendon himself not only doubted the propriety of

the publication, but had even consented to its suppression till a "fit season, which was not likely to be in the present age." His elevated genius looked far onward to posterity. In his remarkable will, he recommended his sons to consult Archbishop Sancroft and Bishop Morley; and it was only his second son, the Earl of Rochester, who took an active part. The position of editors was as delicate as it was perilous; and it has been aptly described by the last editor, who at length has furnished us with a complete Clarendon: "The immediate descendants of the principal actors were alive; many were high in favor; others were connected by the closer links of friendship or alliance." The change of a virulent epithet might be charitable, and spare the ulcerated memories of a family; and time, which blunts the keen edge of political animosities, might plead for the omission of "the unfavorable part of a character," which happened to be rather of a domestic than of a public nature.

All these were important causes which perplexed the editorship of the "History" of Lord Clarendon; and there were also minor ones which operated on the publication. Difficulties occurred in the arrangement of the parts. The earl hardly lived to revise his work: portions of the "Life" had been marked by him to be transferred to the "History." The first transcript by Shaw, the secretary of the author, was discovered to be very incorrect. It was necessary that a fairer copy should repair the negligence of the secretary's. Dean Aldrich read the proofs, and transmitted them to the Earl of Rochester, accompanied by the manuscript copy which the earl preserved. The corrections on the proofs were by his hand. Sprat, Bishop of Rochester, who then had the reputation of being the most skilful critic in our vernacular idiom, it appears, suggested some verbal alterations. But it was affirmed, that the Earl of Rochester had been so scrupulous in altering the style of his father, and so cautious not to allow of any variations from the original, that the strictures

of Sprat had not been complied with; which, however, was not true: for, though the Earl of Rochester would allow no hand but his own to correct the proofs, there were omissions and verbal alterations, and occasionally may be found what went far beyond the mere change of words or phrases.

The manuscript which Calamy saw at the press shows that the transcript, however fair, had required corrections; and probably some confusion had sometimes occurred in transferring passages from the "Life" into the "History." This only can account for the reasonable suspicions of "the Curious Impertinent," which part had been so gratuitously acted by the learned doctor on this occasion, and evidently spread the first rumors of a corrupted or an altered text.

The pretended forgery on Clarendon was nothing but a gross imposture. Who was most deeply concerned in the fabricated lie, we cannot now ascertain. Of the poet, however, we know, that, after frequent admonitions, he had been expelled his college for habitual irregularities; and, having lost his election of the censorship of the college, indulged vindictive feelings towards Dean Aldrich. It was his delight to ridicule and vituperate the Christ-Church deans; and he might have called the "History" of Clarendon, "patch-work," from some imperfect knowledge picked up at the Oxford press. The poet, whose conversation flowed with his wine, on a visit at the seat of Col. Ducket, indulging to excess his Epicurean tastes, there died suddenly of repletion, by prescribing for himself so potent a dose, that the apothecary warned him of "the perilous stuff;" which advice was received with contempt. As the scored Clarendon by Smith was never brought forth, it probably never existed to the extent described; and, as Smith died unexpectedly, there could have been no scene of a death-bed repentance about a forgery which had never been committed. The party-lie caught up in conversation was too suitable to the purposes of Oldmixon's "History" not to be preserved, and even exaggerated: Ducket found a ready

tool in a popular historian, who was not too critical in his researches, whenever they answered his end.

But Truth is the daughter of Time: all the Clarendon manuscripts at length were collected together, and now securely repose in the Bodleian Library, where, had they been deposited at first, the anxiety and contention which for half a century disturbed the peace of honest inquirers had been spared. Why they were not there placed, open to public inspection, is no longer difficult to conjecture. Although no historical fact in the main had been altered, yet omissions and variations, and some of a delicate nature, there were, sufficient to awaken the keen glance of a malicious or an offended observer. The anxious solicitude to withdraw the manuscripts till they might more safely be examined, at a remote period, was the real and the sole cause of their mysterious concealment, and led many from party-motives to question the authenticity, and others to defend the genuineness, of which they were so many years without any evidence.

This bibliographical tale affords a striking illustration of the nature of hearsays, surmises, and cavils; of confident accusations, but ill parried by vague defences; of the infamous fictions to which party-men can be driven; all which were the consequences of that apparent suppression of the original work, which had occurred from the critical difficulties which await the editors of contemporary memoirs. The disingenuity of both parties, however, is not less observable; for while the Clarendonians maintained that the editors, as these had protested, scrupulously followed the manuscript, they themselves had never seen the original; and the Oldmixons as audaciously assumed that it was interpolated and mutilated, without, however, producing any other evidence than their own surmises, or gross fictions of popular rumors.

With the fate of Clarendon before his eyes, a witness of the injury which this mysterious mode of publishing the "History" of Lord Clarendon had occasioned, the son of Bishop Burnet

suffered that congenial work, the "History of his own Times," to participate in the same ill-fortune. On the publication of the first volume, this editor promised that the autograph "should be deposited in the Cottonian Library, for the satisfaction of the public, as soon as the second volume should be printed." This was not done: the editor was repeatedly called on to perform that solemn contract in which he had engaged with the public. A recent fire had damaged many of the Cottonian Manuscripts; and this was now pleaded as an excuse for not trusting the bishop's manuscript to the chance of destruction. Expostulation only met with evasion. We are not now ignorant of the real cause of this breach of a solemn duty. The bishop in his will had expressly enjoined that his 'History" should be given in the state in which he had himself left it. But the freedom of the paternal pen had alarmed the filial editor. He found himself in the exact position which the son of Lord Clarendon had already pre-occupied. Omissions were made to abate the displeasure of those who would have writhed under the severity of the historian's censure; characters were but partially delineated, and the tale sometimes was left half told. It happened that the bishop had often submitted his manuscript to the eyes of many during his lifetime. Curious researchers into facts, and profound observers of opinions, had become diligent extractors, more particularly the supervisor of the printed proofs; and, when the printed volumes appeared, most of these omissions stood as living testimonials to the faithlessness of the prudential editor. The margins of various copies, among the curious in literature, overflowed with the castrations: the forbidden fruit was plucked. We now have the "History" of Burnet, not entirely according to "the will" of the fervid chronicler, but as far as its restored passages could be obtained; for some, it is evident, have never been recovered.* Thus it happened that

* Burnet's "History," iv. 552, edition 1823.

the editors of Clarendon and Burnet form a parallel case, suffering under the inconveniences of editors of contemporary memoirs.

The perplexed feeling of the times in regard to both these "Histories" we may catch from a manuscript letter of the great collector, Dr. Rawlinson: "Among Bishop Turner's* manuscripts," Rawlinson writes, "are observations on Lord Clarendon's 'History,' when sent him by old Edward's son, the nonjuror, who gave it to Alma Mater: *if alterations were made*, this may be a means of discovering. I have often wondered why *the original manuscript* of that 'History' is not put into some public place to answer all objections; but, when I consider *a whimsical family*, my surprise is the less. Judge BURNET has promised, under his hand, on the backside of every title of the second volume of his father's 'History of his Life and Times,' to put in the originals into some public library; but *quando* is the case. I purchased the manuscript of a gentleman who corrected the press, when that book was printed; and amongst his papers I have *all the castrations*, many of which, I believe, he communicated to Dr. Beach's sons, whom T. Burnet had abused in a Life of his father, at the end of the second volume."† Here, then, the world possessed sufficient evidence, at the time of their early appearance, that these "Histories" had suffered variations and omissions by the heirs of their authors, and the imperfect executors of their solemn and testamentary will.

I cannot quit the present subject without a remark on these great party "Histories" of Clarendon and Burnet. Both have passed through the fiery ordeal of national opinion; and both, with some of their pages singed, remain unconsumed: the one criticised for its solemn eloquence, the other ridiculed for its homely simplicity; the one depreciated for its partiality, the other for its inaccuracy; both alike, as we

* *Sic* in original, but probably Tanner.

† Rawlinson's Bodleian Manuscripts, vol. ii. lett. 38.

have seen, by their opposite parties, once considered as works utterly rejected from the historical shelf.

But Posterity reverences Genius; for Posterity only can decide on its true worth. Time, potent over criticism, has avenged our two great writers of the history of their own days. The awful genius of CLARENDON is still paramount, and the vehement spirit of BURNET has often its secret revelations confirmed. Such shall ever be the fate of those precious writings, which, though they have to contend with the passions of their own age, yet, originating in the personal intercourse of the writers with the subject of their narratives, possess an endearing charm which no criticism can dissolve, a reality which outlasts fiction, and a truth which diffuses its vitality over pages which cannot die.*

* I refer the reader to "Curiosities of Literature," vol. iii., art. "Of Suppressors and Dilapidators of Manuscripts:" he will there find, that in the case of the Marquis of Halifax's Diary, of which to secure its preservation the writer had left two copies, both were silently destroyed by two opposite partisans; the one startled at some mean deceptions of the revolutionists of 1688, and the other at the Catholic intrigues of the court.

THE WAR AGAINST BOOKS.

THE history of our literature, at the early era of printing, till the first indications appear of what is termed "copyright," forms a chapter in the history of our civilization which has not been opened to us.

This history includes two important incidents in our literary annals: the one, an exposition of the complicate arts practised by an alarmed government to possess an absolute control over the printers, which annihilated the freedom of the press; and the other, the contests of those printers and booksellers who had grants and licenses, and other privileges of a monopoly, with the rest of the brotherhood, who maintained an equal right of publication, and contended for the freedom of the trade.

Although Caxton, our first printer, bore the title of *Regius Impressor*, printed books were still so rare in this country under Richard the Third, that an act of parliament in 1483 contains a proviso in favor of aliens to encourage the importation of books. During a period of forty years, books were supplied by foreign printers, some of whom appear to have accompanied their merchandise, and to have settled themselves here. It became necessary to repeal this privilege conceded to foreign presses, when, under Henry the Eighth, the art of printing was skilfully exercised by the king's natural subjects; and to protect the English printers, lest their art should decline from a failure of encouragement.

Our earliest printers were the vendors and the binders of their own books, and their domicile on their titlepages

directed the curious to their abodes. Few in number, their limited editions, it is conjectured, did not exceed from two to four hundred copies. The first printers were generally men of competent wealth, and every book was the sole property of its single printer. The separate departments of author, bookseller, and bookbinder, were not yet required; for as yet there was no "reading public." Some of our ancient printers combined all these characters in themselves. The commerce of literature had not yet opened in the speculative vendors of books, and that race of writers who have been designated in the modern phrase as "authors by profession." The very nature of literary property could only originate in a more advanced and intellectual state of society, when unsettled opinions and contending principles would create a growing demand for books which no one yet contemplated, and a property, of a novel and peculiar nature, in the very thoughts and words of a writer.

The art of printing, confined within a few hands, was usually practised under the patronage of the king, or the archbishop, or some nobleman. There existed not the remotest suspicion that the simple machinery of the printer's press could ever be converted into an engine of torture to try the strength or the truth of the church and the state. Sedition, or any allusion to public affairs, never entered the brains of the ingenious mechanics, solely occupied in lowering the prices of the text-writers in the manuscript market by their own novel and wondrous transcript. Their first wares had consisted of romances, which were consulted as authentic histories; "dictes, or sayings," of ancient sages which no one cared to contradict; and homilies and allegories whose voluminousness had no tediousness. Neither did the higher powers ever imagine that any control seemed needful over the printer's press. They only lent the sanction of their names, or the shelter of their abode, at the Abbey of Westminster or the Monastery of St. Alban's, to encourage the manufacture

of a novel curiosity, for its beautiful toy, a printed book; and the press at first was at once free and innocent.

But the day of portents was not slow in its approach: a stirring age pressed on, — an age for books. Under Henry the Eighth, books became the organs of the passions of mankind, and were not only printed, but spread about; for, if the presses of England dared not disclose the hazardous secrets of the writers, the people were surreptitiously furnished with English books from foreign presses. It was then that the jealousy of the state opened its hundred eyes on the awful track of the strange omnipotence of the press. Then first began that WAR AGAINST BOOKS, which has not ceased in our time.

Perhaps he who first, with a statesman's prescient view, had contemplated on this novel and unknown power, and, as we shall see, had detected its insidious steps stealing into the cabinet of the sovereign, was the great minister of this great monarch. It has been surmised that the cardinal aimed to crush the head of the serpent by stopping the printing-press in the Monastery at St. Alban's, of which he was the abbot; for that press remained silent for half a century. In a convocation, the cardinal expressed his hostility against printing; assuring the simple clergy, that, if they did not in time suppress printing, printing would suppress them.* This great statesman, at this early period, had taken into view its remote consequences. Lord Herbert has curiously assigned to the cardinal his ideas as addressed to the pope: "This new invention of printing has produced various effects of which your holiness cannot be ignorant. If it has restored books and learning, it has also been the occasion of those sects and schisms which daily appear. Men begin to call in question the present faith and tenets of the church; and the laity read the Scriptures, and pray in their vulgar tongue. Were this

* See a curious note of Hearne's, in his Glossary to "Peter Langtoft's Chronicle," p. 685; also Herbert's "Typog. Antiq.," p. 1435.

suffered, the common people might come to believe that there was not so much use of the clergy. If men were persuaded that they could make their own way to God, and in their ordinary language as well as Latin, the authority of the mass would fall, which would be very prejudicious to our ecclesiastical orders. The mysteries of religion must be kept in the hands of priests, — the secret and arcanum of church government. Nothing remains more to be done than to prevent further apostasy. For this purpose, since printing could not be put down, it were best to set up learning against learning; and, by introducing able persons to dispute, to suspend the laity between fears and controversies. Since printing cannot be put down, it may still be made useful." Thus the statesman, who could not by a single blow annihilate this monster of all schism, would have wrestled with it with a statesman's policy.

The cardinal at length was shaken by terrors he had never before felt from the hated press. This minister had writhed under the printed personalities of the rabid SKELTON and the merciless ROY; but a pamphlet in the form of "the Supplication of Beggars" is a famed invective, which served as a prelude to the fall of the minister. The author, SIMON FISH, had been a student of Gray's Inn, where, in an Aristophanic interlude, he had enacted his grace the cardinal to the life, and deemed himself fortunate to escape from his native shores to elude the gripe of Wolsey. In this pamphlet, all the poverty of the nation, — for our national poverty at all times is the cry of "the beggars," — the taxation and the grievances, are all laid to the oppression of the whole motley prelacy. These were the thieves and the freebooters, the cormorants and the wolves, of the state; and the king had nothing more to do than to put them to the cart's tail, and end all the beggary of England by appropriating the monastic lands.

On a day of a procession at Westminster, this seditious

tract, aiming at the annihilation of the whole revenues of churchmen, was found scattered in the streets. Wolsey had the copies carefully gathered and delivered to him, to prevent any from reaching the king's eyes. Merchants, at that day, were often itinerants in their way of trade with their foreign correspondents, and frequently conveyed to England these writings of our fugitive reformers. Two of these merchants, by the favor of Anne Bullen, had a secret interview with the king. They offered to recite to the royal ear the substance of the suppressed libel. "I dare say you have it all by heart," the king shrewdly observed, and listened. After a pause, Henry let fall this remarkable observation: "If a man should pull down an old stone wall, and begin at the lower part, the upper might chance to fall on his head." What at that moment was passing in the sagacious mind of the future regal reformer, is now more evident than probably it was to its first hearers. Wolsey, suspicious and troubled, came to warn the king of "a pestilent heretical libel being abroad." Henry, suddenly drawing the very libel out of his bosom, presented a portentous copy to the startled and falling minister. The book became a court-book; and "the witty atheistical author," as the Roman-Catholic historian designated him, was invited back to England under the safeguard of the royal protection.

But the secret and perhaps the yet obscure influence of the press must often have been apparent to Henry the Eighth, when the king sat in council. There he marked the alarms of Wolsey, and the terrified remonstrances of the entire body of "the Papelins;" and, when the day came that their ejectors filled their seats, the king discovered, that, though the objects were changed, the same dread of the press continued. The war against books commenced: an expurgatory index, or a catalogue of prohibited books, chiefly English, was sent forth before Henry had broken with the papal power; subsequently, the fresher proclamation declared the books of

the Papelins to be "seditious," as the use of "the new learning" had been anathematized as "heretical."

In these rapid events, dates become as essential as arguments. In 1526, anti-popery books, with their dispersers, were condemned as heretical. In 1535, all books favoring popery were decreed to be "seditious books." There were books on the king's supremacy, for or against, which cost some of their writers their heads; and there were "injunctions against English books," frequently renewed as "pestilent and infectious learnings."* All these show that now the press had obtained activity, and betray the uneasy condition of the ruling powers, who were startled by a supernatural voice which they had never before heard.

When the first persecution of "the new religion" occurred, it did not abate the secret importations of Lutheran books.† These with the merchant had become an article of commerce; and with the zealous dispensers, an article of faith: both alike ventured their lives in conveying them to London and other places, and even smuggled them into the universities. They landed their prohibited goods in the most distant places, at Colchester or in Norfolk. One of these chapmen in this hazardous commodity of free-thinking was at last caught at his bookbinder's. He suffered at the flaming stake, and others met his fate.

It was now apparent that the secrecy and velocity of conveying the novel projects of reform, which could not otherwise have been communicated to the great body of the people till this awful instrument had been set to work; the unity of opinion which it might create among the confused multitude; and the passions which a party, either in terror or in triumph, could artfully rouse in the sympathies of men, —

* Strype's "Memorials," i. 344 and 218.

† A curious and a copious catalogue of these books, "though the books themselves are almost perished," may be seen in Strype's "Ecclesiastical Memorials," i. 165.

were felt and acknowledged by the monarch, who had himself staked the possession of his independent dominion on the energy and the eloquence of a single book,* to prepare his people for his meditated emancipation from the tiara: and, were any other proof wanting, we discover the terror of the Bishop of Durham, on the appearance of "a little book printed in English, issuing from Newcastle." His lordship writes in great trepidation to the minister Cromwell of this portentous little book, "like to do great harm among the people;" and advising that "letters be directed to all havens, towns, and other places, to forbid the book to be sold." All the ports to be closed against "a little book brought by some folks from Newcastle"! These incidents were certain demonstrations of the political influence of this new sovereignty of the printing-press.

In the simplicity of this early era of printing, the same bishop had all the copies of Tindal's Testament bought up at Antwerp, and burned. The English merchant employed on this occasion was a secret follower of the modern apostle, who, on his part, gladly furnished all the unsold copies which had hung on hand, anxious to correct a new edition which he was too poor to publish. When one of the Tindalites was promised his pardon if he would reveal the name of the person who had encouraged this new edition, he accepted the grace; and he assured the Lord Chancellor that the greatest encourager and supporter of his Antwerp friends had been the bishop himself, who, by buying up half the unsold impression, had enabled them to produce a second. This was the first lesson which taught that it is easier to burn authors than books.

There were two methods by which governments could

* The book, "De Verâ Differentiâ inter Regiam Potestatem et Ecclesiasticam," was called "the King's Book." It seems that the scholastic monarch gave some finishing strokes to what had probably passed through the hands of his most expert casuists.

counteract the inconveniences of the press: the one, by clipping its wings, and contracting the sphere of its action, which we shall see was early attempted; and the other, by adroitly turning its vehemence into an opposite direction, making the press contend with the press, and by division weaken its dominion.

Henry the Eighth left the age he had himself created with its awakened spirit. The three succeeding reigns, acting in direct opposition to each other, disturbed the minds of the people; controversies raged, and books multiplied. The sphere of publication widened in this vertiginous era, printers greatly increased in the reign of Edward the Sixth. But the craft did not flourish, when the craftmen had become numerous. We have the contemporary authority of one of the most eminent printers, that the practice of the art, and the cost of the materials, had become so exceedingly chargeable, that the printers were driven by necessity to throw themselves into the hands of "the stationers," or booksellers, for "small gains."* It is probable, that, at this period, the printers perceived that vending their books at the printing-office was not a mode which made them sufficiently public. This is the first indication that the printing, and the publication or the sale of books, were becoming separate trades.

In this history of the progress of the press in our country, the Stationers' Company now appears. This institution becomes an important branch of our investigation, for its influence over our literature; for its monopoly, opposed to the interests of other publishers; and, above all, for the practice of the government in converting this company into a ready instrument to restrain the freedom of the press.

Anterior to the invention of printing, there flourished a craft or trade who were denominated "stationers:" they were scribes and limners, and dealers in manuscript copies, and in

* "Archæologia," vol. xxv. 104.

parchment and paper, and other literary wares. It is believed by our antiquaries that they derived their denomination from their fixed locality, or *station in a street*, either by a shop or shed; and probably, when their former occupation had gone, still retained their dealings in literature, and turned to booksellers.* This denomination of "stationers," indicating their stationary residence, would also distinguish them from the itinerant vendors, who, in a more subordinate capacity at a later period, appear to have hawked about the town and the country pamphlets and other portable books.

In the reign of Philip and Mary, "the Stationers" were granted a charter of incorporation, and were invested with the most inquisitorial powers.

The favors of a tyrant are usually favors to individuals who profit at the cost of the community, and who themselves, overlooking every principle of justice, bind up their own selfish monopoly with the prosperity of criminal power. This we discover in the Company of Stationers, who were the willing dupes of that absolute power in the State which had created the corporation to do its watchful work, to carry on the war against books; and, by their passive obedience, they secured to themselves those privileges and licenses, and other monopolies, which they now amply enjoyed.

By this charter of the Stationers, it was specified that no one was to exercise the art of printing, unless he was one of the society; and the corporation, with their extraordinary but lawful authority, were to search as often as they pleased any house or chamber, &c., of any stamper or printer or binder or seller of any manner of books, which they deemed

* Pegge, in his "Anecdotes of the English Language," has somewhat crudely remarked that "the term 'stationers' was appropriated to *booksellers* in the year 1622;" but it was so long before. It is extraordinary that Mr. Todd, well read in our literary history, admits this imperfect disclosure of Pegge into the "Dictionary of the English Language." The terms "stationer" and "bookseller" were synonymous and in common use in the reign of Elizabeth; and may be found in Baret's "Alvearie," 1573.

obnoxious to the State, or their own interest! — to seize, burn, take away, or destroy, or convert to their own use.* The Stationers were, in fact, a Spanish inquisition for the cabinet of Philip and Mary, and whom the queen consulted on critical occasions; for her majesty once sent for the warden to inquire whether they had seen or heard of a sort of books sent from Zurich. The war against books was never pushed to such extremities as in a proclamation of Philip and Mary, which Strype calls "a short but terrible proclamation." Here we learn that "whoever finds books of heresy, sedition, and treason, and does not forthwith burn the same without showing or reading them to any other person, shall be *executed for a rebel"!* † It is evident that the grant of this incorporation was designed to make the interests of the company subservient to those of the court; for, by the intermediate aid of the vigilant Stationers, every printer would be controlled, since none were allowed to be printers who were not members of this corporation, and therefore amenable to its laws.

In the succeeding reign of Elizabeth, every thing changed except these state-proclamations in the war against books. The object had altered, but not the objection; for, though the books were different, the Elizabethan style is identical with the Marian. The same plenary powers of the Stationers were strengthened by an additional injunction, by which the government held the whole brotherhood with a closer grasp. The company were commissioned not only "to search into bookbinders' shops, as well as printing-offices, for unlawful and heretical books," but they were responsible for "any unruly printer who might endanger the church and state," and "who for covetousness regard not what they print, whereby ariseth great disorder by publication of unfruitful, vain, and infamous books and papers. None shall print any

* The Charter may be found in Herbert's "Typographical Antiquities," p. 1584.

† Strype's "Memorials," iii. part 2, p. 130.

manner of book, except the same be first *licensed by her majesty by express words in writing*, or by *six of her privy council.*" *

When we recollect that the Stationers' Company under Mary were composed of the very same individuals who, two years after under Elizabeth, were busily ornamenting their shelves with all their late "seditious and heretical" books, and in removing out of sight all their late lawful and loyal ware, this transition of the feelings must have placed them in a position painful as it was ridiculous. But the true genius of a commercial body is of no party, save the predominant: pliant with their interests, a corporation, like a republic, in their zealous union can do that with public propriety, which, in the individuals it is composed of, would be incongruous and absurd.

The rage of government in this war against books was still sharper at a later period, provoked by the spread of the Mar-prelate pamphlets. A decree of the Star-chamber in 1586, among other orders, allows no printer to have an additional press without license; awards that there shall be no printing in any obscure part of a house; nor any printer out of the city of London, excepting at the two Universities; and till "the excessive multitude of printers be abated, diminished, or by death given over," no one shall resume that trade; and that the wardens of the Stationers' Company, with assistants, shall enter at all times warehouses, shops, &c., to seize all

* In the Lansdowne Manuscripts, 43, fol. 76, will be found "an act to restrain the licentious printing of unprofitable and hurtful books," 1580. After declaring that the art of printing is "a most happy and profitable invention," it is pointed at those "who pen or translate in the English tongue poesies, ditties, and songs; serving for a great part of them to none other end, what titles soever they bear, but to set up an art of making lascivious and ungodly love, to the intolerable corruption of life and manners; *and to the no small or sufferable waste of the treasure of this realm, which is thereby consumed in paper, a forren and chargeable commoditie.*" The first paper made in England was at Dartford, in 1588, by a German, who was knighted by the queen.

"letter-presses, and other printing instruments, to be defaced, melted, sawed in pieces, broken or battered at the smith's forge."* Amid all this book-phobia, a curious circumstance occurred. The learned could not prosecute their studies for the prohibition against many excellent works, written by those who were "addicted to the errors of Popery in foreign parts," and which also contained "matters against the state of this land." In this dilemma, a singular expedient was adopted. The archbishop allowed "Ascanius de Renialme, a merchant bookseller, to bring into this realm *some few copies* of every such sort of books; upon this condition only, that they be first brought to me, and so delivered only to such persons whom we deem most meet men to have the reading of them." At this time it must have been an affair of considerable delicacy and difficulty to obtain a quotation, without first hastening to Lambeth Palace, there to be questioned!

Printing and literature, during the long reign of Elizabeth, in spite of all these Star-chamber edicts, amazingly increased: there seemed to be a swell from all the presses. Of 175 stationers, 140 had taken their freedom since this queen's accession. "So much had printing and learning come in request under the Reformation," observes our historical antiquary Strype. And such was the proud exultation of the great printer John Day, that, when he compared the darkness of the preceding period with what this publisher of Fox's mighty tomes of Martyrology deemed its purer enlightenment, he never printed his name without this pithy insinuation to the reader, "Arise; for it is DAY!" Books not only multiplied, but unquestionably it was at this period that first appeared the art of aiding these ephemeral productions of the press which supplied the wants of numerous readers. The rights of authors had hitherto derived a partial existence in privilege conceded by the royal patron; but it was now that

* This decree of the Star Chamber is printed in Herbert's "Typographical Antiquities," p. 1668.

they first gathered the fuller harvests of public favor. We shall shortly find a notice among the book-trade of what is termed "copyright."*

If the freedom of the press had been wholly wrested from the printers, it was not the sole grievance in the present state of our literature; for another custom had been assumed, which hung on the royal prerogative, — that of granting letters patent, or privileged licenses, under the broad seal, to individuals, to deal in a specific class of books, to the exclusion of every other publisher. Possibly the same secret motive which had contrived the absolute control of the press suggested the grants of these privileges. One enjoyed the privilege of printing Bibles; another, all law-books; another, grammars; another, "almanacs and prognostications;" and another, ballads, and books in prose and metre. These privileges assuredly increased the patronage of the great, and the dispensations of these favors were doubtless often abused. A singing-man had the license for printing music-books, which he extended to that of being the sole vendor of all ruled paper, on the plea, that, where there were ruled lines, musical notes might be pricked down; and a private gentleman, who was neither printer nor stationer, had the privilege of printing grammars and other things, which he farmed out for a considerable annual revenue, by which means these books were necessarily enhanced in price.

Such monopolies, which entered into the erroneous policy of that age, and the corrupt practices of patronage, long continued a source of discontent among the generality. This was now a period when the spirit of the times raised up men who would urge their independent rights. A struggle en-

* The privilege of a royal grant to the author was the only protection the author had for any profits of his work. Henry the Eighth granted Palsgrave his exclusive right for the printing of his book for seven years. Bishop Cooper obtained a privilege for the sale of his "Thesaurus" for twelve years; and a translator of Tacitus, for his version, during his natural life.

sued between the monopolists and the excluded, who clamored for the freedom of the trade. "Unruly printers" not only resisted when their own houses were besieged by the "searchers" of the stationers, but openly persisted in printing any "lawful books" they chose, in defiance of any royal privilege. A busy lawyer had been feed, who questioned this stretch of the prerogative. But the patriotism or the despair of these "unruly printers" led to the Clink or to Ludgate, — to imprisonment or to bankruptcy! The day had not yet arrived when civil freedom, though youthful and bold, with impunity could "kick against the pricks" of the prerogative. It is curious here to discover, that the aggrieved had even formed "a trade-union" for contributions to defend suits at law against the privileged; and when they were reminded that this mode only aggravated their troubles, and were asked by the sleek monopolists what they would gain if all were in common, which, as the privileged assumed, "would make havoc for one man to undo another,"— that is, those who were patentless would undo the patentees, — these Cains, in the bitterness of their hearts, fiercely replied to their more favored brothers, "We should make you beggars like ourselves!" *

Amid these clamors in the commonwealth of literature, the patentees became alarmed at the danger of having their patents revoked. The booksellers had become the more prosperous race; and some of these, combining with the Stationers' Company, opposed the privileged few. The advocates for the freedom of the trade advanced a proposition too tender to be handled by the Doctor of Civil Law, who was chosen for the arbitrator. At once these boldly impugned the prerogative royal itself in its exercise of granting privileges to printers, which they declared was against law: and however they might more successfully urge, that the better policy for the public was to admit of competition, and moderating of prices by

* "Archæologia," xxv. 112.

this freedom of publication, they add, "So, too, let every man print what 'lawful book' he choose, without any exceptions; even 'any book of which the copies thereof had been *bought of the authors* for their money.'" Here we find the first notice of "copyright," and the very inadequate notions yet entertained of its nature.

The plea of the patentees more skilfully addressed the Doctor of Civil Law by their assumption of the irrefragable rights of the royal prerogative. Their own privileges they maintained by the custom, as they showed that "all princes in Christendom had granted privileges for printing, sometimes for a term of years, or for life; that ancient books bore this inscription, *Cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum;* that the queen's progenitors had exercised this right, and would any dare to lessen her majesty's prerogative?" All infringers had ever been punished. They further urged, that the good of the commonwealth required that printing should be in the hands of known men; being an art most dangerous and pernicious, if it were not straitened and restrained by politic order of the prince or magistrates. With truer arguments, they alleged that many useful books were now published unprofitable to the patentees, who had no other means of repaying themselves but by the sale of other books restricted to them by the protection of their privileges; and, finally, they declared that the public were incurring some danger that good books might not be printed at all if privileges were revoked, for *the first printer was at charge for the author's pains and other extraordinary cost;* but should any succeeding printer who had "*the copy gratis*" sell cheaper on better paper, and with notes and additions, it would put an end to the sale of the original edition: and they pithily conclude with the old wisdom, that "it is easier to amend than to invent." Here again we see specified the cost of "copyright" in the publication of a new book.

This attempt to open the freedom of the trade, which oc-

curred about 1583, the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Elizabeth, at length was not wholly unsuccessful: the monopolists conceded certain advantages;* and about twenty years subsequently, towards the end of that queen's reign, when the craft of authorship, adapting its wares to the fashion of the day, was practised by a whole race of popular writers, the booksellers became almost the sole publishers of books, employing the printers in their single capacity.†

In this war against books, the severe decree of the Star Chamber, 1586, was renewed with stricter prohibitions and more penal severity by a decree of the Star Chamber, under Charles the First, in 1637. Printing and printers were now placed under the supervision of the great officers of state; law-books were to be judiciously approved by the lord chief-justice; historical works were to be submitted to the secretaries of state; heraldry was left to the lord marshal; divinity, physic, philosophy, and poetry were to be sanctioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London. Two copies of every work were to be preserved in custody, to prevent any alterations being made in the published volumes, which would be detected on their comparison. Admirable preparatory and preventive measures! Here would ensue a general purgation of every atom in the human system, occasioning obstructions to the doctrines and discipline of the Church of England and the state of government. The aim of all these decrees and proclamations was to abridge the number of printers, and to invigorate the absolute power conferred on the Stationers' Company, who had long delivered themselves, bound hand and foot, to the government, for the

* Nichols on the Stationers' Company. — *Lit. Anecdotes*, iii.

We have a list "of books yielded by the richer printers who had licenses from the queen;" but whether they were only copies bestowed in charity for the poorer "stationers," or given up by the monopolists, I do not understand. — HERBERT'S *Typographical Antiq.*, p. 1672.

† Herbert's "Typographical Antiq.," preface.

servile possession of their privileges. Printers were still limited to twenty, as in the reign of Elizabeth; and only four letter-founders allowed. Every printed book on paper was to bear the impress of the printer's name, on pain of corporal punishment. They held books in such terror, that even those which had formerly been licensed were not allowed to be reprinted, without being "reviewed," as they express it, and rewatched by placing on guard this double sentinel. There are some extraordinary clauses which betray the feeble infancy of the rude policy of that day. The decree tells us, that "printing in corners without license had been usually done by journeymen out of work;" and, to provide against this source of inquietude, it compels the printers to employ all journeymen out of employ, "though the printer should be able to do his own work without these journeymen:" and, in the same spirit of compulsion, it ordains that all such unemployed shall be obliged to work whenever called on.* Masters and men were equally amenable to fines impossible to be paid, and penal pains almost too horrible to endure, short of life, but not of ruin: a dark, a merciless, a mocking tribunal, where the judges sate the prosecutors, and whose unwritten laws hung on their own lips; and where to discharge any accused person as innocent was looked on as a reproach of their negligence, or an imputation of their sagacity.

Did the severity of these decrees produce the evils they encountered? or was it the existence of the evils which provoked the issue of these edicts? Did the terrific executions eradicate the political mischief? There was no free press in Elizabeth's reign, and yet libels abounded! The government compulsively contracted the press by their twenty stationary printers; and, behold! movable presses, whose ubiquity was astonishing as their ceaseless working. An invisible

* This remarkable "Decree of Starr-chamber concerning Printing" was in the possession of Thomas Hollis, and is printed in the Appendix to his curious Memoirs, p. 641.

printer mysteriously scattered his publications here and there during the contest of the Mar-prelate faction with the bishops; and the libels of the Jesuit Parsons, and others of the Roman party, were as rife against her majesty and her minister. The same occurred when the Star Chamber was guided by the genius of Laud: the altar was raised, and the sacerdotal knife struck! but the groans of the immolated victims were a shout of triumph. A clear demonstration that nothing is really gained by the temporary suppressions which power may enforce: the sealed book circulates till it is hoarded; and the author, pilloried, mutilated, or hanged, obtains a popularity, which often his own genius afforded him no chance to acquire.

The secret design of all these entangling edicts was to hold the printers in passive obedience to the government, whatever that government might be; for each separate government, though acting on opposite principles, manifested a remarkable uniformity in their proceedings with the press. In the arbitrary days of Charles the Second, an extraordinary, if not an audacious, attempt was made to wrest the art of printing out of the hands of its professors, and to place the press wholly at the disposal of the sovereign. This usurping doctrine was founded on a startling plea. As our monarchs had granted privileges to the earliest printers, and, from the introduction of the art into England, had never ceased their patronage or their control, it was inferred that our kings had never yielded *the royal prerogative of printing*, any more than they had that of *coining*. The "mystery" of printing, in the style of the lawyers, was "a flower of the crown"! — the exercise of the prerogative; and therefore every printer in England must be a sworn servant of the crown. At such a period, we are not surprised to find an express treatise put forth to demonstrate to his sacred majesty, that "printing belonged to him, in his public and private capacity, as supreme *magistrate* and as *proprietor:*" in reality, there was to be

but one printer for all England, and that printer the king! This was giving at once the most elevated and the most degraded notions of "the divine art," which this servile assumer describes can "not only bereave the king of his good name, but of the very hearts of his people." *

We observe the lamentations of these advocates of arbitrary power over the freedom of the press, or, as such maintained, the confusion produced "by the exorbitant and unlawful exercise of printing in modern times." They appeal to the miseries and calamities not only recently witnessed in our own country, but in Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Wherever they track a footstep of the liberty of the press, they pause to discover its accompanying calamity. One of these writers, to convey an adequate notion of the spread and political influence of the press, has thrown out a very excitable remark: "Had this art been known in the time of the grand profession of the Donatist and Arian heresy, it would have drowned the world in a second deluge of blood and confusion, to its utter destruction long time since," — a stroke of church history which might suggest a whole volume!

The interests of the printers had coincided with the designs of government in limiting the number of presses; for the policy of their narrow confederacy was, the fewer printers, the more printing! But the interests of the booksellers were quite opposite: they were for encouraging supernumerary printers, and overstocking the printing-offices with journeymen; and by this means they succeeded in bringing the printers down to their price or their purpose; and it is insinuated, on the Machiavelian principle, that, the number being

* "The Original and Growth of Printing, collected out of History and the Records of this Kingdom," &c., by Richard Atkyns, Esq., 1664. In this rare tract first appeared a narrative of the introduction of printing into Oxford, *before Caxton*, by the printer Francis Corsellis, to prove that printing was brought into England by Henry the Sixth.

greater than could live honestly by the trade, one-half must be knaves, or starve. And it seems that "knaves" were in greater requisition by the publishers of "the unlawful," or, as these were afterwards called on the establishment of a licenser of the press, "the unlicensed books," who revelled in their seductive profits.*

Among the effusions of the political literature of the egregious Sir ROGER L'ESTRANGE, versed in the arcana of the publishing system of his day, I discover a project which terminated in renewing the office of the licenser of books in his own person; the only pitiful preferment the Restoration brought the clamorous loyalist. Our literary knight addressed Charles the Second to impress on his majesty the urgency of an immediate regulation of the press; "this great business of the press being now engrossed by Oliver's creatures, and the *honest* printers being impoverished by the late times."

This project to regulate the press by L'Estrange chiefly turned on the dexterous management of the printers. He calculated, for four thousand pounds, to buy up the presses of the poor printers, who were willing to be reimbursed, and look to better trades. The bolder project was to emancipate the printers from the tyranny of the booksellers, by which means they would no longer be necessitated to print whatever their masters ordered. The printers at this moment had menaced to separate themselves from the stationers with a view of their own.

The printers had been gradually deprived of any shares in new publications; they had been thrown out of all copy-

* For "unlicensed books" the printer charged twenty-five per cent extra; but the booksellers sold them for double and treble the cost of other books.

"Considerations and Proposals in order to the Regulation of the Press, together with diverse instances of Treasonous and Seditious Pamphlets, proving the necessity thereof," 1663.

right, and probably had grown somewhat jealous of their prosperous masters: the printers complained that they were nothing else than slaves to the booksellers. They called for an independent company of "the mystery;" and, reverting to the custom of the early printers, they desired to have their own presses under their own management, and to print only the copies of which they themselves were the proprietors.

The future licenser of the press, who was throwing his net to haul in all these fish at a cast, took advantage of this project, which at once was levelled at the freedom of the trade and the freedom of the press. Printers solely working on their own copies would indeed check "the ungovernable ambition of the booksellers" by diminishing their copyrights; while those "unhappy printers" would be relieved, who, at present, have no other work than what "the great dealers in treasonous or seditious books" furnished them. All these were but the ostensible motives; for the real object designed was, that the printers should become the creatures of the patronage of government; and, by the diminution of their number, the contracted circle would be the more easily managed.

Such were the systematic struggles of our governments in the revival of the severe acts for the regulation of printing at various periods. It was long assumed that printing was not a free trade, but always to remain under regulation.

When Dr. Johnson, laboring under the pressure of his ancient notions, contending with the clear perception of his sceptical sagacity, once stood awed before the sublime effusion of Milton's "Areopagitica," he hazarded this opinion; for, by balancing his notions, it cannot be accepted as a decision: "The danger of such unbounded liberty, and the danger of bounding it, have produced a problem in the science of government, which human understanding seems unable to solve."

And, whatever either the advocates or the adversaries of the freedom of the press may allege, this problem in the

science of government remains as insoluble at this day as at any former period, — a truth demonstrated by a circumstance which has repeatedly occurred in our own political history. The noble treatise of Milton for a free press had not the slightest influence on that very parliament whose members had long suffered from its oppression. The Catholics clamored for a free press under Charles the Second; but the same act operating against them under James the Second, from the use of the press by the Protestant party, the liberty of the press was then condemned as exorbitant and intolerable. The advocates of a free press thus become its adversaries, whenever they themselves form the ruling power. Orators for the freedom of the press suddenly send forth outcries against its abuses; but as those, whoever the party may be, who are in place, are called the government, it always happens that the opposition, whatever may be their principles, must submit to the risk of being deemed seditious libellers.

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